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L. C. KNIGHTS H. A. MASON

F. R. LEAVIS

CONTENTS

Page

THE CASE OF STEFAN GEORGE, by *D. J. Enright* 242

NOTES FROM AMERICA (II):
KENNETH BURKE AS LITERARY CRITIC,
by *Marius Bewley* 254

INTELLECTUAL LIFE IN THE U.S.A.:
COMMENT AND REPLY, by *Seymour Betsky* 278

AUTHORITY AND METHOD IN EDUCATION:
SOME REFLECTIONS ON MR. FORD'S REJOINDER,
by *G. H. Bantock* 289

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

THE PROGRESS OF POESY, by F. R. Leavis (p. 310). SOME MARGINAL NOTES TO *A Study of History*, by R. G. Lienhardt (p. .314). TRANSLATION INTO SCOTS, *A Braird o Thristles*, by Douglas Young, reviewed by J. H. Speirs (p. 321). WHAT IS A NATIONAL MONUMENT? reviews by Geoffrey Walton (p. 323). THREE BOOKS ON MUSIC, *The Poetics of Music* by Igor Stravinsky, *Music and Poetry of the English Renaissance* by Bruce Pattison, *A History of Music in Scotland* by H. G. Farmer, reviewed by W. H. Mellers (p. 330). *Scientific Man Versus Power Politics*, by H. J. Morganthau, reviewed by G. H. Bantock (p. 331). THE BRITISH COUNCIL IN THE GOLDEN AGE, records reviewed by W.H.M. (p. 335).

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THE CASE OF STEFAN GEORGE

'Judging from my own experience I should say that the influence of George's poetry, like that of other serious works of art, consists in developing one's capacity for wonder and for work and in compelling one back to nature. That is all I can say on the matter . . .'

(*Rilke, in a letter, May 29, 1907; trans. R. F. C. Hull*).

WHAT is strange about the case of Stefan George is that a poet so obviously possessing the qualities and abilities of a considerable poetic genius should yet have produced so little work that is undeniably great poetry. The more closely we study George's work the more conscious we become of a particular failure at the very heart of his canon. The poet, assuming the functions of priest, prophet and reformer simultaneously, took upon himself the utterance of a 'message' which developed at a different rate from his poetry; the 'philosophy' and the 'poetry' could not be geared together—the former was always attempting to lead in a direction where the latter could not follow, and as a consequence both failed to fulfil themselves. Except, that is, in a handful of poems where his *poetic* genius, at any rate, achieved its full scope—poems most of which come from the volume *Das Jahr der Seele* ('The Year of the Soul'), published in 1897. The present article is an attempt to elucidate this failure by considering two of George's volumes, *The Year of the Soul* and *Die Bücher der Hirten- und Preisgedichte, der Sagen und Sänge, und der hängenden Gärten* ('The Books of Shepherds' Songs and Songs of Praise, of Legends and Lays, and of the Hanging Gardens'), which appeared two years earlier, in 1895. For in these two volumes we see George wavering between the kind of poetry for which he was naturally gifted and the kind of ethical-philosophical prophetism in which he was ambitious.

* * * *

In his preface to the *Books of Shepherd's Songs* George says:

> . . . von unsren drei grossen bildungswelten ist hier nicht mehr enthalten als in einigen von uns noch eben lebt
>
> (Of our three great formative civilizations nothing more is included here than still lives on in some of us).

The emphasis may be supposed to lie on the word *einigen*—'some of us'—for in the poems which follow there is not any protracted attempt to persuade us that these *Bildungswelten* (Greek, Mediæval

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and Oriental) or, rather, the qualities of spirit produced and fostered by these worlds, can and should be re-created in the inhabitants of the modern age. Their appeal is, consciously I think, to a small minority. The various qualities of spirit and character and the 'atmosphere' of life as it was, or as the poet supposed it to have been, in these three formative or cultural civilizations are presented in this book, and the cultivated reader (the actual or potential Georgean) is left to enjoy that with which he is supposed to have an innate sympathy.

Concerning each of the three sections of the volume, Gundolf[1] tells us, it is essential to understand that what is happening is 'keine Auffrischung des Vergangenen, sondern Vergegenwärtigung eines Ewigen'—not a revival of the past, but a presentation or realization of something eternal:

> Die blosse Mystik und die blosse Artistik liegen ihm gleich fern . . . In den *Hirtengedichte* stehen nur Erfahrungen die George selbst gelebt hat und die von uns noch gelebt werden können
>
> (The merely mystical and the merely artistic lie equally distant from him . . . In the *Shepherds' Songs* there are only experiences which George himself has lived and which can still be lived by us).

Here are experiences which can be lived by us: yes, but we have to be convinced that these experiences are worth living. Gundolf's method of proof is by praise; or by a species of quasi-philosophical eloquence which only serves to lead us away from the poetry:

> Mit dichterischer Unbedingtheit ist hier die Welt unter das *Gesetz* der Schönheit gestellt. Die Schönheit . . . ist bei George . . . eine Gottheit, d.h. ein Gesetz das alles durchdringt, ja die Welt zusammenhält, unsichtbar wirkend im ganzen All, sichtbar erscheinend in menschlichen Leibern durch Sein und Tun . . .
>
> (Here, with complete poetic freedom, the world is presented under the *law* of beauty. Beauty, for George . . . is Godhead, *i.e.*, a law which penetrates everything, which in fact holds the world together, working invisibly in the Whole, made visible in human bodies through Being and Doing . . .).

'Beauty is truth, truth beauty': beauty is also a 'law', and in *Algabal* (George's third published volume, which appeared in 1892) we encountered a law which allowed Algabal to murder his 'dear'

---

[1] *George*, by Friedrich Gundolf (Berlin, 1916): in its way a monumental book—the priest expounding the priest who expounds the God. We may feel, however, that Gundolf is more concerned with 'Georgeanism', a partly extraneous thing, than with George's poetry.

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brother with the greatest complacency: 'Sieh ich bin zart wie eine apfelblüte' ('See, I am tender as an appleblossom'). By Gundolf's account George would still seem to be dangerously near the bottomless abyss of extreme æstheticism.

But the actual text may seem a little disappointing—or perhaps reassuring—after such enthusiastic commentary. In some of the poems of the first section we find the qualities and experience of the Disciple expounded and extolled without any reference to the qualities and nature of the God: in, for instance, *Auszug der Erstlinge*, which deals with the 'Departure of the Firstborn', chosen by fate (or the gods) to leave their homes and fulfil some high, redeeming function, to travel towards some undesignated goal:

Wir schieden leicht, nicht eines hat von uns geweint,
Denn was wir tun gereicht den unsrigen zum heil.
Wir wandten nur ein einzigmal den blick zurück
Und in das blau der fernen traten wir getrost.
Wir ziehen gern: ein schönes ziel ist uns gewiss
Wir ziehen froh: die götter ebnen uns die bahn

(Lightly we parted, not one of us has wept,
For what we do will bring our people happiness.
Once, only once, we turned our gaze behind
Then strode with confidence into the blue beyond.
We travel gladly: for us a splendid purpose is assured,
We travel joyfully: the gods make smooth our path).

The nature of the 'splendid purpose' ('schönes ziel') is not dwelt upon: what George wishes to do is to re-create in us the experience of 'being chosen by the gods', 'being dedicated', with the consequent experience of 'sacrifice'—here the sacrifice of mean, comfortable home-pleasures in the service of the gods and of the People. But in *Geheimopfer* the sacrifice is more drastic—the sacrifice not of comfort and safety and petty happiness, but of life itself; yet even this is made gladly:

. . . Dann schmiedet uns fest
An säulen von erz
Der seher und hebt
Den schleier vom Gott,
Wir beben und schaun
In sprühender kraft
In zehrendem schmerz
In glühendem rausch
Und sterben in ewigem sehnen

(To columns of bronze
The seer chains us fast
Then raises the veil
Concealing the God,
We tremble and gaze
In fiery strength

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In consuming pain
In glowing rapture
And we die in infinite longing)

But is this kind of evocation appropriate to the aims which George was becoming more and more conscious of? Naturally enough, George does not wish to present Greek life without the 'dark gods' —the Dionysus without whom there can be no Apollo[2]—but I feel that in this poem the dark gods are being whitewashed in a way that makes them less, rather than more, relevant to a modern, sick, society. The effect of the short panting lines with their regular, piston-like beat and the drawn-out sigh in the longer final line—more suggestive, perhaps, of some mild sexual orgy than of deliberate blood-sacrifice—is to 'prettify' the experience, to take the sting out of it, to rob it of what might have been a salutary terror in the face of the unknown God. For something with a similar intention, but much more convincing both in its creation of a sense of religious awe and in its implications for a world that has lost touch with the fundamental mysteries, we may go to Goethe's *Römische Elegien*, to the *Twelfth* in particular, even though this is concerned with initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries and not with human sacrifice.[3] And what brings us back again and again to Wordsworth's conception of Nature—though 'his poetry is the reality, his philosophy . . . the illusion'—is his unswerving recognition of the 'terror' which lies beyond personality; as in the famous passage from Book I of *The Prelude*, which begins:

. . . lustily
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat
Went heaving through the water like a swan . . .

It is Wordsworth's consciousness of 'unknown modes of being' and his vision of 'huge and mighty forms, that do not live like living men' which make him so much more than an amiable old man with an interest in bird-life, wild flowers and rustic oddities.

George, too, is at grips with *Urdinge*, as Gundolf tells us—with 'things of origin' like Wordsworth's terrible, animate mountain-peak. But *Geheimopfer* manages to be both ineffectual and distasteful. Style and matter are somehow at odds; we cannot say that one is more mature than the other, but only that their conjunction is unhappy. It is Hölderlin who succeeded here, precisely

[2]'The affirmative answer to life even in its strangest and hardest problems; the will to life, rejoicing, in the *sacrifice*, of its highest types, at its own inexhaustible nature—*that* I called Dionysiac'. (Nietzsche, *Götzendämmerung*, 1888).

[3]When George demands comparison with Goethe it is rarely to his advantage; as Dr. August Closs says, 'By the side of Goethe's, George's works appear sapless. We miss the unconscious, joyous harmony of Goethe's Greek ideal'. (*Genius of the German Lyric*).

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where George fails; his dealings with 'things of origin' are so much more convincing, his appeals to the ancient gods so much more compelling. Appeals of this kind could not be made without anguish and were perhaps only to be made at great mental risk: the unknown god is not to be approached with that ease and safety with which one enters a church—

Täglich muss ich die verschwundene Gottheit wieder rufen . . .

(Every day I must invoke vanished divinity again . . .
letter from Hölderlin to Susette Gontard, Spring 1799).

George's appeals, George's approach, are too slick: he is on nodding terms with the unknown god before he has even come face to face with him, and we cannot be very deeply impressed by a contact with the ancient deities, with 'vanished divinity', which has apparently been established at such little cost and with so little effort.

One of the best of the Hellenic poems is *Der Ringer*; this neat little character-sketch of a wrestler is certainly a fine piece of reportage; it puts our contemporary English 'Reporter Poets' to shame:

Er geht, mit vollem fusse wie der löwe
Und ernst: nach vielen unberühmten jahren
Die zierde ganzen landes und er sieht nicht
Die zahl der jauchzenden und nicht einmal
Die eltern stolz aus dem gedränge ragen

(He walks, with full footsteps like the lion,
And grave: after many unfamed years
The whole land's ornament, and he does not see
The number of the cheerers, and not even
His parents proudly emerging from the crowd)

But is it more than reportage? It does not need to be more in order to reach a high poetic standard, but it must be more if it is to sustain Gundolf's profound exegesis—to sustain, that is to say, the considerable weight of the George Circle and all that this stood for. Yet the qualities of character and the particular kind of spiritual distinction which we are meant to admire in the Wrestler are cold, unappetizing and, worst of all, unhelpful. We admire the poet's skill in sculping his hero: but we would hardly care to meet the hero outside the stadium. This is one of the points perhaps—and there are several of them—at which the poet's path and the path of National Socialism intersect; but we have to remember that if those paths meet, they meet only to divide again and to travel in very different directions.

With a certain change of emphasis, the same kind of criticism must be brought against the second section of the book, the Mediæval World. Gundolf's enthusiasm finds rather tactless expression when he tells us that the Parsifal legend even in Wolfram's epic is not so real, vital and operative as in these poems of George's We cannot help but suspect a modern poet of some

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kind of bogusness whose poetry contrives to be more mediæval than the Middle Ages, to out-Wolfram Wolfram. And what we find in the *Legends and Lays* is not the pure essence of religion and chivalry but a weakened, diluted and even sentimentalized eclecticism: Pre-Raphaelite knights, but no real blood; the mild temptation in the dim chapel, but not the fearful struggle with the fiend; an urbane renunciation of the world, but none of the stringencies of mediæval mysticism. The poet's concern is overwhelmingly with the Squire, the Novice, the Disciple, the Devotee—Capetanakis rightly remarked, 'no one has ever depicted so temptingly as George the bliss of the disciple whose only aim in life is to serve the master'[4]—and the Divinity who inspires all this service is a dim, vague figure hidden away in the background. The great theme is *Dedication*: but we may feel that dedication is a meaningless conception once it is separated from its object.[5] Where does George's 'Pfad der Ehre' lead? Presumably to the Holy Grail —but only *presumably*, because, for George, to travel loyally and courageously and altruistically is apparently more important than to arrive at a worthy conclusion.

Hence it is not surprising that occasionally there is a disturbing air of religiosity about the poems: incense mixed a little too heavily with the smoke of battle. And occasionally the idea of the 'brotherhood of warriors' is tainted with preciosity, with a slightly repellent sentimentality: as in the poem called *Der Waffengefährte* ('The Brother-in-Arms')—in which, by the way, Gundolf claims to find the apotheosis of *Mannentreue* (a word which can hardly be translated into English: 'fraternal loyalty' or 'soldierly fidelity', a superior kind of *Kameradschaft*):

Er wird mich immer unterweisen
Im graden wandel vor dem Herrn.
Mein bruder ist aus wachs und eisen,
In seinem schutze weil ich gern

(He will always instruct me
In upright walking before the Lord.
My brother is made of wax and iron,
In his protection I gladly stay)

Sporenwache is the title and subject of another poem: the Vigil of the Spurs—the young squire, preparing for the accolade, must *renounce* and *dedicate* . . . It is this narrow aspect of the Middle Ages, this element taken out of its context, that appeals so strongly to George. And from this one-sided picture of the life chivalric, with its improbable emotions, its strained celibacy and its stained-glass Christianity, we turn with relief to that truly mediæval work, Gottfried's *Tristan und Isolt*, where loyalty and treachery struggle

[4]*Demetrios Capetanakis: A Greek Poet in England.*

[5]Significantly enough, the title of the first poem of George's first book (*i.e., Hymnen*) is *Weihe*—'Dedication'.

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in the same heart, where spiritual *Minne* is strengthened with an infusion of honest lust, and knights are to be found out of their armour.

The poet's vision of the Orient, which comprises the third section of the book, is similarly eclectic: the perfumes without the dust, the beautiful bodies but not the starving beggars. But in this hot, glamorous eastern atmosphere (which has always had a special attraction for the German—see the number of distinguished Orientalists, and Platen, Rückert, and of course Goethe's *West-östlicher Divan*), George the prophet is content to take a siesta while George the poet, by himself for once, achieves poems of considerable beauty. The reader is left to enjoy himself, almost completely, and hence we can read most of this section without that feeling of being continually on the defensive, of continually resenting the tone of cold superiority in which George's verse is often enunciated. Here is a good example of the kind of writing which we shall meet, on a higher level, in George's next book—'Du lehnest wider eine silberweide'—the captured scene, the transfixed gestures, the mild and impersonal melancholy, the little story that neither has nor requires a point:

> Du lehnest wider eine silberweide
> Am ufer, mit des fächers starren spitzen
> Umschirmest du das haupt dir wie mit blitzen
> Und rollst als ob du spieltest dein geschmeide.
> Ich bin im boot das laubgewölbe wahren
> In das ich dich vergeblich lud zu steigen . . .
> Die weiden seh ich die sich tiefer neigen
> Und blumen die verstreut im wasser fahren
>
> (Against a silver willow on the shore
> You leaned and with your fan you framed your hair,
> The pointed slats in flashes seemed to flare
> And as in play you twirled the gems you wore.
> Down to my boat that leafen arches hide
> I vainly had implored you to descend . . .
> I saw the boughs of willow lower bend
> And scattered blossoms on the water glide.
>
> *Translated by C. N. Valhope and Ernst Morwitz*).

One is tempted to describe the poem as an etching—it has that neatness, that incisiveness, that precision—but it is too colourful . . . and one is tempted to describe it as a skilful piece of tapestry. See how the colours of the vowel-sounds are so tellingly balanced—'wider' against 'silberweide', 'spieltest' against 'dein' and 'geschmeide', then 'neigen' repeating the sound of 'weiden'. And if the vowels are colours, the alliteration and assonance is the pattern of the forms: especially the repeated *w*, *f*, *s*, *d*, and *b*—with the last line, devoid of either balanced vowel-sounds or any very noticeable alliteration or assonance, to signify the dissolving of the picture, the scattered blossoms dispersing on the stream. This and

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George's other poems in the same manner have a poetic value similar to that of T. S. Eliot's *La Figlia Che Piange*: as it were, an unusually successful piece of Imagism.

* * * *

The Year of the Soul, I believe, is George's greatest poetic success; it contains that part of his work which will undoubtedly survive long after the George Circle and the traditions of the Master have been forgotten. It may be regarded as significant that this volume occupies the central position in the chronological list of George's works. In Gundolf's near-philosophical or, indeed, super-philosophical thesis that position is held by *Der Siebente Ring* (1907) with its incarnation of the much-heralded deity. But a literary-critical evaluation of *The Year of the Soul* will be in accordance with its chronological position: the poet is already at the height of his poetic powers but he is not yet absolutely sure of his *mission*, and thus we are spared that cold, imperious, distant didacticism—distant and cold because the poet is too proud to resort to persuasiveness—and that assured consciousness of superiority which mar much of his later work.

The 'place' of *The Year of the Soul* is a northern park; the 'time' changes from autumn to winter and then to summer; the 'action' consists largely of a dialogue between two people—an *I* and a *You*—but often the dialogue approaches soliloquy and it seems that what we are overhearing is the self-communings of the poet during the changing seasons of creative power. George says in his preface: 'selten sind so sehr wie in diesem buch Ich und Du dieselbe seele'—'I and You are rarely so much the same soul as in this book'; but this prose statement is more precise and definite on this point than are the poems.

Each poem, at any rate, stands in its own right, many of them apparently 'pure' impressions, similar to the images from the *Book of the Hanging Gardens*; but here endowed with a far greater vitality—with the power of leaving their frames and moving into the mind and heart of the reader. This is the introduction to the Park, a short superb poem which George never surpassed:

Komm in den totgesagten park und schau:
Der schimmer ferner lächelnder gestade,
Der reinen wolken unverhofftes blau
Erhellt die weiher und die bunten pfade.

Dort nimm das tiefe gelb, das weiche grau
Von birken und von buchs, der wind ist lau,
Die späten rosen welkten noch nicht ganz,
Erlese küsse sie und flicht den kranz.

Vergiss auch diese lezten astern nicht,
Den purpur um die ranken wilder reben
Und auch was übrig blieb von grünem leben
Verwinde leicht im herbstlichen gesicht

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(Come to the park they say is dead, and view
The shimmer of the smiling shores beyond,
The stainless clouds with unexpected blue
Diffuse a light on motley path and pond.

The tender grey, the burning yellow seize
Of birch and boxwood, mellow is the breeze.
Not wholly do the tardy roses wane,
So kiss and gather them and wreathe the chain.

The purple on the twists of wilding vine,
The last of asters you shall not forget,
And what of living verdure lingers yet,
Around the autumn vision lightly twine.
Trans. C. N. Valhope and E. Morwitz).

The 'autumn vision' is here as immediately present to the senses as in Keat's *Ode*:

Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies . . .

It is possible that, as Prof. Bowra suggests, this is the Autumn of creative power:

> 'The poems are a symbolical presentation of a crisis in the poet's life. He passes from the aftermath of the harvest in autumn through the sterility of winter to new life in summer'.[6]

But the symbolism is not underlined; the poet has not interposed his personal feelings—whether of self-pity or of satisfied weariness—between the autumn vision and the reader. The vision is allowed to achieve its *own* feeling, to communicate its *own* message; and the vision is that 'the park they say is dead' is very far from dead, and the message is the sense of illumination which the vision leaves with us, the gift of an increased awareness of the natural scene and a heightened enjoyment of living—in its simplest aspect, an unpretentious but cogent assurance that life *is* worth living. Without that assurance, no philosophy can help us very much—and we find it more easily in George's humble nondescript Park than in his hushed mediæval chapel or his Hellenic arena.

Other poems in the present volume of this same high kind are those which begin 'Gemahnt dich noch das schöne bildnis dessen', 'Nun säumen nicht die gaben zu erhaschen', 'Die blume die ich mich am fenster hege', 'Wir schreiten auf und ab im reichen flitter', and 'Der hügel wo wir wandeln liegt im schatten'. The first of these ends with this fine stanza:

Und von der insel mooskegrönter steine
Verliess der schwan das spiel des wasserfalls
Und legte in die kinderhand die feine
Die schmeichelnde den schlanken hals

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[6] *The Heritage of Symbolism.*

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(The swan by falling waters left his stand,
His island built of stones that mosses deck,
And laid within a child's caressing hand,
And delicate—his slender neck.

Trans. C. N. Valhope and E. Morwitz).

The last begins:

Der hügel wo wir wandeln liegt im schatten,
Indes der drüben noch im lichte webt
Der mond auf seinen zarten grünen matten
Nur erst als kleine weisse wolke schwebt

(The hill where we are roaming lies in shadow,
While that beyond is all enmeshed in light,
The moon within her green and tender meadow
Is still a little cloud, adrift and white.

Trans. C. N. Valhope and E. Morwitz).

In these poems, as in 'Komm in den totgesagten park und schau', 'technique' and 'subject-matter' are in perfect accord; there is not, to use T. S. Eliot's words, the slightest uneasiness between 'what is said' and 'the way that it is said'.

Such poetry cannot be said to be evocative of more than it says; it does not carry out the spiritual exploration for which Rilke's mobile quivering line is so apt—it simply does not attempt that kind of thing. Each word snaps into place in the line, each line snaps into place in the stanza, all the stanzas are bound tightly together into the poem. There is no vagueness and little mystery, no very obvious emotion and little ratiocination: but there is precision and clarity—above all, a keen apprehension of the small detail, whether of sight, sound or smell, which will crystallize the whole scene. This art is the apotheosis of confidence: the poet does not waver, doubt, stumble, hesitate or retrace his steps—Rilke, on the other hand, often seems to stumble upon his discoveries, to waver into new certainties, to advance by what looks like retreat. The picture is complete when George inscribes the last word of the last line of a poem; a statement has been made, not a question asked and answered. This seems to me an art of a limited kind—especially when we compare it with Rilke's work—but not so narrow that we can afford to neglect the fine achievement of George's best poetry.

Such being the nature of *The Year of the Soul*, it is not surprising that Gundolf must confess it to be 'die Verzweiflung aller Ausleger'; read fairly it *is* 'the despair of all interpreters' with such large claims as Gundolf has to put forward. Perhaps as a result of this, Gundolf's remarks on the book are more than usually just; as when he says:

> Das 'Jahr' das wir hier mitwandeln ist weder ein äusserer Ablauf von Naturvorgängen noch eine landschaftsmalerische Programm-musik zu einem Herzenstext, sondern die Naturform des Seelenschicksals, der Raum innerer Zeit, ein sichtbares Gesetz des Wandels

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> (The 'Year' with which we wander here is neither an external unfolding of natural events nor a landscape-painter's programme music to a heart-text, but the Nature-form of the fate of a soul, interior Time turned into Space, a visible law of change).[7]

The peculiar success of these poems lies in the fact that for once—and not, alas, for long—what is seen is the meaning of what is shown; idea and appearance are identical; spiritual and physical are at one; technique and subject-matter cannot be distinguished. The interpreter is starved for material, and the literary critic comes into his own.

Prof. Bowra speaks of the 'melancholy' of *The Year of the Soul*, which, he considers, 'is partly that of a man who feels himself imprisoned in his own personality, and needs an outlet, a wider field for his energies'. Again, it seems to me that this estimate of *The Year* is based on a higher opinion of George's later volumes than mine, on an acceptance of these books as the genuine apotheosis of his work; the admirer of *The Seventh Ring* and *The Star of the Covenant* and *The New Empire*, looking back on *The Year*, is bound to find it limited and even 'minor'. Quite probably George himself felt that in this volume he was making little headway with the momentous task of spiritual regeneration of which he was becoming increasingly conscious; but I believe that *The Year of the Soul* offered George a greater outlet and a wider field for his *poetic* energies than any other volume. As for the melancholy of this book —one has to use that word to describe the prevalent tone of the poems—it is a quiet, impersonal kind of melancholy, the pensiveness of a man who for a time has *escaped* from the prison of his own personality. Above all, if the melancholy of the book is 'autumnal', it is the melancholy of an autumn that has brought home a good harvest and is already thinking of the spring to follow.

But there is one element of Georgeanism, important to any study of the poetry as 'cult', which we must notice in this book. And that is the poet's recognition of his alone-ness: the *I* is aware that it has not yet found a fitting and worthy *You*. Here we have the beginnings of the Master's yearning for a Disciple. In the present collection of poems this yearning is present only as conscious 'loneliness', a human desire for friends and a true sympathy of spirits—but later we find it growing more extreme and less 'human',

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[7] *Cf.* Philipp Witkop's rather simpler description of the poems of *The Year* as 'keine Stimmungs—, sondern Schicksalsbilder . . . ' —'not pictures of mood, but pictures of fate . . . ' (*Deutsche Dichtung der Gegenwart*, 1924). It is ironical to witness the verve and intelligence with which Gundolf attacks those who seek for romantic or sentimental 'heart-texts' in George's work, while at the same time he is everywhere seeking and apparently finding texts drawn from a no-man's land somewhere between philosophy, mysticism and social reform.

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until it even degenerates into self-pity carefully disguised under a vast assumption of priestly superiority.

The shift from this gentle melancholy loneliness to a colder, harder aloofness—the attitude not of a man who lacks friends but of a man who desires only followers—is prognosticated in the poem which begins:

Des sehers wort ist wenigen gemeinsam

(The word of seers is not for common sharing).

* * * *

In the volumes which follow we find George in unmistakable fashion deserting poetry to expound a message which—though it never attains to clarity—seems to be comprised of a mixture of philosophy, social reform and dim political desiderations, with a religious veneer. The next book, *The Tapestry of Life* (*Der Teppich des Lebens*, 1899), corresponds to the Christian Annunciation: the Angel-messenger from 'the beautiful life' ('das schöne Leben') appears to George. Then in *The Seventh Ring* (*Der Siebente Ring*, 1907) the Incarnation of the 'God' in the body of the youth Maximin takes place, the great desideration has come to pass: 'die Vergottung des Leibes und die Verleibung des Gottes' ('the deification of the body and the embodiment of the deity'). This is succeeded, in *The Star of the Covenant* (*Der Stern des Bundes*, 1914), by a didactic and detailed revelation of the 'tables of the laws' of the new civilization. The final volume, *The New Empire* (*Das Neue Reich*, 1928), claims victory for George and his disciples:

Gottes pfad ist uns geweitet
Gottes land ist uns bestimmt . . .

(Path of God is open to us
Land of God appointed for us . . .)

But, resident in the tone and quality of the poems of this and the previous volume, we find *not* a proof of victory but a recognition of defeat. Georgeanism, as cult and message, has not justified the terrible sacrifice of poetic talent which it entailed.

Goethe's three epigrammatic definitions suggest a method of distinguishing roughly between the three German poets whose work, in different ways, has seemed significant to our generation:

Mystik: eine unreife Poesie, eine unreife Philosophie.
Poesie: eine reife Natur.
Philosophie: eine reife Vernunft.

(Mysticism: an immature poetry, an immature philosophy.
Poetry: a mature Nature.
Philosophy: a mature Reason).

According to these definitions, George's poetry is 'mysticism': an uneasy partnership of poetry and philosophy in which neither comes

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to maturity. Rilke's achievement is 'mature Nature', in the exploration and depiction of which philosophical reasoning plays no obvious or important part. Hölderlin's work is a simple and co-operative union of 'mature Nature' and 'mature Reason', of poetry and philosophy: a union which transmutes philosophy into something no longer wholly to be apprehended by 'reason' and which, though not removing poetry from its proper sphere, raised it to its highest order. Rilke is the poet; Hölderlin the philosophical poet; Stefan George, in the mass of his work, the poet *manqué*, the philosopher *manqué*.

D. J. ENRIGHT.

KENNETH BURKE AS LITERARY CRITIC[1]

I.

SINCE the publication of *A Grammar of Motives* in 1945 Kenneth Burke has become firmly lodged in the consciousness of an influential group of American writers as a critic almost exquisitely rare, abounding with ideas and enviably in control of the wide range of new knowledge that characterizes the present century. If not widely read—if at times even unreadable—he has had a genuine influence on a few good critics, and, at a more general level, he has become a paradigm of the *deliberately* serious, a state of affairs to which his unreadability (such as it is) has no doubt contributed. 'Burke's ethical doctrine, the "neo-liberal ideal" ', writes a recent and enthusiastic appraiser, 'advanced pan-realism definitely into the realm of the pragmatic'. So we see that Burke is not being taken lightly. In fact how magnificently turned out he seems to be, both in intellect and sensibility, may be gauged by opening a new American book by Stanley Edgar Hyman, *The Armed Vision*. In the final paragraph of his essay on Burke Mr. Hyman anticipates Burke's future criticism as something 'almost unequalled for power, lucidity, depth, and brilliance of perception'. He tells us that 'we can be sure . . . that it will be a literary criticism constituting a passionate avowal of the ultimate and transcendent importance of the creative act'. As a study in relative values it is interesting then to turn to Mr. Hyman's concluding estimate of T. S. Eliot whom he sees as a 'sick, defeated, and suffering man'. 'Traditional criticism', he continues, 'can yet be, unlike Eliot's, turned with hope toward the future, but it will want different things of literature and it will have to choose a different tradition'. Ironic reflections rise through the mind on placing these two estimates together, but one can only pause here to observe that

[1] *A Grammar of Motives*. Kenneth Burke (Dennis Dobson, 30/-).

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if contemporary criticism is going to sail beyond the bath of western stars it is perhaps fitting that a 'neo-liberal pragmatist' should be at the helm. Before leaving this theme one might further remark that lodged somewhere in Mr. Hyman's book, between the essays on Eliot and Burke, there is an extended consideration of Christopher Caudwell, and it soon becomes evident that the critical vessel (as conceived by Mr. Hyman) is, by this time, well on its way to the salubrious airs of a Burkeian latitude. I say this with no more insidious intent than to indicate the temperament and prejudices which, if not necessary to, frequently accompany an enthusiasm for Burke.

It is obvious, then, that his criticism has the support and encouragement of a considerable group—and it is a group that has a good chance of growing in influence. This critical popularity is partly owing to the fact that although Burke has committed himself against the technological aspect of contemporary society he has evolved a 'methodology' of criticism that cannot help playing into the hands of those to whom technology may be much less present as a danger. In other words, though Burke's virtues are his own, he has certain qualities easily transmissible as vices at precisely that level he most thoroughly deplores. Another reason for a possible 'Burke boom' in America is that he has developed a vocabulary that insulates its user against the shock of the work of art itself—and it must be remembered that the American literary critic is naturally very sensitive about the distance that separates his own language and modes of feeling from the English literary tradition. To shift the Coleridgean phrase, he is uneasily aware that he must effect a willing suspension of nationality during the process of evaluation unless a distorted judgment is to result. To the unpleasantness of this situation Burke seems to have formulated an answer, or rather, a series of answers. 'Formulation' is, I think, the correct term here for there is little that is radically new in Burke. His originality consists chiefly in the creation of a vocabulary so well oiled and metallic that one would almost swear the machine is wholly a new thing. At any rate, it is a 'machine' in which those disciples who wish to put it to such uses will be able to speed away from any very exacting evaluation of a work of art without, in fact, displaying a noticeable cowardice during the process of escape. And finally, Burke's criticism represents an approach to literature sufficiently specialized to become the vested interest of a group. In this respect it is illuminating to revert again to Mr. Hyman. In his somewhat insulting essay on Edmund Wilson he quotes this passage from *Axel's Castle*:

> 'This discussion would, of course, lead us, if we pursued it, to the nature of language itself and hence to the mysteries of human psychology and what we mean when we talk about such things as "reason", "emotion", "sensation" and "imagination". And this must be left to the philosophers . . . '

And then Mr. Hyman comments:

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> 'These things are, oddly enough, the very things which the critic in our time *cannot* leave to the philosophers, but must concern himself with to the best of his ability. They constitute the cornerstone of any serious discussion of literature. The fact that Wilson has never permitted himself to go into them is merely another evidence that the attempt to interpret, "translate", and promote major literature on no more solid a basis than that sharp reading and eclecticism cannot result in more than flashes of insight at its best . . . '

My own opinion of Mr. Hyman's view of the matter will, perhaps, become clear enough in the following pages, but here one might pause to note that, while few have ever doubted that all the arts and sciences at some higher level of unification become mutually assimilated in each other's being, this vision of inter-relatedness will hardly be discovered by mere promiscuity. The indiscreet introductions that so many psychologists in our time have effected between the various arts and sciences have so far resulted only in stillborn progeny, and one of the most notable things about Burke's criticism is that a radical indecision as to what constitutes the human personality weakens answers that he often gives the appearance of handing out pat. Burke is fond of referring to the 'unchanging structure of the neurological substance', but if this does anything it is simply to act as a fulcrum on which the material and spiritual interpretations of the soul can see-saw as occasion requires. For if Burke seems to favour the former he certainly maintains a kind of back-street relationship with the latter. Mr. Hyman accuses Wilson of being merely a translator, but there will be occasion to show that Burke has his own method of translating a poem into a symbolic act between which (*whatever* the intrinsic justification of such a procedure if discreetly used) and the verbal structure from which it is purportedly drawn, *he*, at least, demands only the roughest equivalence. It is in this farther, higher realm of act, this symbolic Heaven to which he sends good poems, that the fusion between literary criticism and the other sciences takes place in Burke's own criticism.

In the following remarks on Burke it will be necessary to say a good deal about the ideas he uses as a critical *procédé*, but I wish to say once and for all that it is not primarily towards a criticism of those ideas in themselves that I wish to direct this article. Like everything else that breeds too fast, ideas that come in flocks are likely to be something of a plague, but Burke's ideas taken separately are frequently stimulating, and are sometimes capable of providing genuine insights into a work of art. That such insights are so relatively few in his work is due, I think, to a misplaced emphasis—and it is an emphasis broad enough to include within its scope a wide range of particularizations. These must be the real subject of the following paper; but here, in a previsionary sort of way, and on the basis of the faint pencilling already sketched in, I would hazard the judgment that Burke's emphasis chiefly points to how little, at long last, he really cares for literature.

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I wish, then, to look first at the tone of his criticism, to inspect his attitude to literature, an attitude that does not so much express itself in the specific ideas he advocates as it peeps *through* the eye-holes of these ideas as through a mask, and changes the over-all expression by a singularly fixed gaze. And secondly, I wish to examine with some particularity his conception of literature as Symbolic Action and Ritual: or, to be more precise, the ways in which he uses this conception, the end he seems to have in view, and the kind of satisfaction he appears to derive from it. This method may involve a degree of repetition; but perhaps this will be forgivable, for since Burke published his first critical work in 1931 his successive volumes have risen towards the prosperous precincts of *A Grammar of Motives* through a widening spiral which has, in its steady repetitions, pushed upwards and outwards the original set of meanings discoverable in *Counter-Statement*. Nothing could be said legitimately against such a form of development, but it is noticeable that the later and more affluent generations of ideas demonstrate the attenuations of continued inbreeding, and one cannot help missing the greater forthrightness of the two first critical volumes (*Permanence and Change*, 1935, was the second). This is worth while noting because it suggests something of the difficulty one has in writing about his work. One can never be quite sure that Burke will not circle back on any given text in his books with a more elusive (but by no means contradictory) interpretation of his original meaning. However, in the end the strategy is likely to prove unfortunate since he has already given several indications that his meaning may someday entirely evanesce in a gust of his own dialectical subtlety.

II.

In writing of Burke as a literary critic one is up against a difficulty at the very outset. Many have doubted whether he is really a literary critic at all. In the book already named we find Mr. Hyman settling this problem with characteristic generosity: 'The reason reviewers and editors have had such trouble fastening on Burke's field is that he has no field, unless it be Burkology. In recent years it has become fashionable to say that he is not actually a literary critic, but a semanticist, social psychologist, or philosopher. A much more accurate statement would be that he is not *only* a literary critic, but a literary critic plus those things and others'. I remember Burke's having expressed somewhere a certain dislike for Leonardo, and so he may have found the above passage disagreeable enough. However, whatever injustice is involved, it is *only* as a literary critic that I wish to consider him here, and his volumes as a whole give one reasonable grounds for supposing that he considers himself most fully defined in this term. Towards arriving at some sense of his critical tone I wish to review his criticism briefly here under three headings: (1) the central proposition of his critical theory and what it means; (2) his idea of the function of a critic; and (3) the principal ground of weakness in his criticism.

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1. In the Foreword to his book, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, 1941, Burke remarks that 'the reader who wants the specific criticism of books might be more disappointed [with *The Philosophy*] than the reader who wants a theory of the criticism of books'. Even though one may not like the kind of separation between theory and practice implicit in such a statement it is justifiable if there is a constant and intelligent communication between the two levels, neither level tyrannizing over the other, each increasing its effectiveness under disciplines suggested by the other. The passage indicates clearly enough the direction of Burke's bent away from the practical, and one feels that such a quick recognition of a natural predisposition *should* act as a safeguard against the abuses of theory; for the latter can be useful only as long as it works towards the elucidation of particular poems.

Burke's theory of criticism covers many points, but the heart of it may be summed up in this brief statement: 'To consider language as a mode of *action* is to consider it in terms of "poetry". For a poem is an act, the symbolic act of the poet who made it—an act of such a nature that, in surviving as a structure or object, it enables us as readers to re-enact it'. I have already said that with Burke's ideas in themselves one seldom quarrels, and here it is an agreeable task to point to the virtues of the theory itself. Poetry becomes, not a segregated experience, but an experience at one with all human action. Literature is, in such a view, brought into an arena of the widest significance, and theoretically its participation in life is complete—or rather, literature *is* life in an entirely realistic way. Poetry is therefore seen to be ethical, and of the deepest influence in shaping 'our structures of orientation'. Such a view, so far from being new, will be substantially familiar to everyone, but Burke does manage to give it a centrality and completeness of statement that is admirable. And at this point, in the face of the dark hints that have been made here about Burke's critical practices, and before offering substantiations, I should like to say that few critics have been more sensitively aware of the relationship between language and practical action than Burke has been, or have spoken with greater dramatic effectiveness of the problems of communication in contemporary society. *Permanence and Change* is filled with such pointed observations as: 'Speech takes its shape from the fact that it is used by people acting together. It is an adjunct of action—and thus naturally contains the elements of exhortation and threat which stimulate action and give it direction'. But at this time the theory of Symbolic Action was not fully evolved, and Burke was chiefly concerned with the operation of the word in its social context—a field in which he has considerable skill. But he has a proportionate lack of perception in literary matters, and when, in his next book, *Attitudes toward History*, 1937, he turned back to literary criticism again and developed his theory of Poetry as Symbolic Action with great explicitness it became clear that, whatever the virtues of such a view *could* be, Burke lacked the requisite critical tact and awareness to use it as anything other

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than an implement finally murderous. It was in this book that Burke began in real earnestness to shuttle back and forth from literature to sociology to economics to psychology to magic and religion[1] with a sometimes attractive but decidedly alarming air of irresponsibility as to which station he happened to be in at any given moment, and the situation became genuinely frightening when one gathered, from remarks dropped here and there along the way, that he was never quite certain that *any* station was *not* literary criticism, to which platform his mind *still* frequently reverts as 'home'. Even with such a slender definition of the theory as has been given above it must be obvious that only a very exacting literary critical control could prevent such a theory from sooner or later encountering catastrophe, could have the strength of will to turn down idle invitations often extended to rounds of dissipation during which the integrity of any poem would surely lose its health and die. But it may be that this extension of the influence of literary criticism over the adjacent sciences is partly due to Burke's Marxism. Burke is such a pastoral sort of Marxist, what one is tempted to refer to as 'the *good* Marxist' (H. B. Parkes' excellent essay on Burke in *The Pragmatic Test* stresses certain political unorthodoxies in his Marxism), that one is likely to under-estimate at first the influence of his political thought on his criticism, though Burke himself is terribly explicit about it in every volume. (Mr. Hyman suspiciously omits any reference whatever to Burke's politics).

2. But this theme moves the argument from Burke's theory to his idea of the function of the literary critic. In *Attitudes toward*

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[1]It is again necessary to repeat that I am speaking of Burke's critical practice, which is the only thing that matters, and not of his critical theory. As regards the latter, he seems to have, at least in his last book, *A Grammar of Motives*, a more exacting conscience about the integrity of separate sciences than previously. For example, he quotes as 'the principle of specification' the following remark from Kant: 'Rather than enlarging the sciences, we merely disfigure them when we lose sight of their respective limits'. Burke proceeds to comment: 'The principle of specification is particularly applicable . . . to terminologies of motives that attempt to treat of ethical issues in exclusively non-ethical terms, or of verbal action in terms of non-verbal motion, or of human motives generally in terms of non-human entities, such as the learning processes of lower animals, or the physiology of endocrine secretions, and the like. In brief, we violate the principle of specification when our terms for the examination of one field are got by simple importation from some other field'. However, I remember Burke's having, in an earlier book, discussed the various fields of research as an arbitrary parcelling out of lands at specific historical dates and in the dominant framework of a prevailing orientation, itself constituting a deflection from purity. In any case, he has always treated literary criticism with considerably more latitude, and his critical practice has never much taken cognizance of this 'principle'.

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History we find a full definition of his conception of himself in this role:

> 'Our own program, as literary critic, is to integrate technical criticism with social criticism (propaganda and didactic) by taking the allegiance to the symbol of authority as our subject. We take this as our starting point, and "radiate" from it. Since the symbols of authority are radically linked with property relationships, this point of departure automatically involves us in socio-economic criticism. Since works of art, as "equipment for living", are formed with authoritative structures as their basis of reference, we also move automatically into the field of technical criticism (the "tactics" of writers). And since the whole purpose of a "revolutionary" critic is to contribute to a change in allegiance to the symbols of authority, we maintain our role as "propagandist" by keeping this subject forever uppermost in our concerns. The approach, incidentally, gives one an "organic" view of literature, sparing him the discomforts of discussing the "social" and the "technical" as though they were on two different levels. He spontaneously avoids a dualism of "form" and "content", "beauty" and "use", the "practical" vs. the "esthetic", etc. He gets a unitary approach to the matter of dialectical interaction'.

Here one can see how easily, without an exacting critical conscience, Burke's theory moves through art to propaganda, how easily the literary merges into the revolutionary critic. It is not merely that one may not like what Burke is propagandizing ('Communism is a co-operative rationalization, or perspective, which fulfills the requirements suggested by the poetic metaphor', he wrote in *Permanence and Change*); it is not that one wholly disagrees with the idea of art *as propaganda*, but the cold-blooded sacrifice of art *to* propaganda that is implicit here is repellent. (Burke always keeps his way out free, however, and anyone wishing to read his reservations on this position should look at *Attitudes toward History*, volume 2, page 110, and there is also a relevant essay in *The Philosophy*). And it might be noticed that even in what is commonly considered his best essay, 'Symbolic Action in an Ode by Keats', which will be analysed later, there is a good deal more of the Marxist critic than appears at first. The 'organic' view of literature recommended above evidently involves an analysis of the work from the viewpoint of political purpose, and ironically enough, not the artist's but the critic's purpose. It also seems debatable whether the compression of motives that would result from interpreting a work towards such an end, so far from sparing the integrity of the work of art, would not result in a distortion far greater than the inevitable violations imposed by any given set of critical terms. And there would still be the 'dialectical inter-action' between two purposes—the poet's and the critic's—that would be resolved at last in an appropriately 'coached' estimate. But one feels how futile it is to discuss these things in Burke's writings at all. The reality he deals with comes increasingly to seem less the

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reality of the objective world (despite the 'pan-realism' attributed to him) than its image artfully mirrored in a great shiny vocabulary, and if that vocabulary follows the movements of the real world with some skill, it is independently capable of internal readjustments that, at a second's warning, can carry Burke by the grace of a shifting stress fairly off to dialectical safety.

The above passage, which is representative of his style, exhibits his technique at its usual level. Those words of which he hopes, sooner or later, to make special use, he appropriates for his strategies by enclosing in inverted commas. The various key-words in this passage mean in Burke pretty much what they mean anywhere else. Yet to anyone who reads this paragraph with Burke's writings as a whole in memory they will seem to have a great specialness about them. For Burke has endlessly discussed and defined them through his books. Thus: tactics, equipment for living, authoritative structures, basis of reference, symbols of authority, revolutionary, linkages, etc., have all been up for protracted analysis somewhere, and sometimes on a number of different occasions. Burke has seemed to attach quite new and precise meanings to such words, and he has frequently made striking and original comments on them; but in the end the performance exceeds the reality, and we are left very much as we were before. But if Burke has not significantly enlarged or narrowed the meanings of his words, he has in the meantime gained control of the reader's responses to them—he has given his reader great faith in them, and in those intervals when Burke himself is content not to be at grips with meaning, these highly trained words are capable of carrying on like so many theatrical wrestlers who know how to thrill an audience without much pain to themselves. But to return to the above passage more particularly: it is interesting to note his taste for the adverb 'automatically'. (Burke's criticism is especially American in a certain flair it has for the mechanical). As one draws to the close of the paragraph, however, it is surprising to note that the third point at which he might have been expected to use 'automatically' he uses 'spontaneously' instead, an adverb characteristically applied to life rather than to mechanical processes. It is precisely Burke's tendency to think of literary criticism as, in the end, something automatic to speak of something living in mechanical terms that would be a chief complaint against him. The two adverbs are not, of course, *quite* interchangeable in the above context, and the degree to which they are not should finally prove the margin of grace in Burke's criticism. I realize, certainly, that when Burke says 'Poetry is Act' he is not referring to mechanical motion, and that he is as far from the merely automatic as he could get in such a phrase. But I am concerned here with the processes (still to be examined) by which Burke converts poetry into a supposedly equivalent act. I remarked in the beginning of this paper that although Burke hated technology and disliked science, at least insofar as it has provided a context for life, the critical 'methodology' he has evolved seems designed in tone to betray him

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into the hands of his enemies. And in a similar manner, he desires to emphasize the human act, to insist on the dramatistic aspect of literature (as opposed, for instance, to a behaviouristic criticism); but for that purpose he is willing to convert a poem into a graph (he analyses poems in terms of Chart, Prayer and Dream in *The Philosophy of Literary Form*), count image clusters to discover the neuroses of a poet, and interpret all art from the viewpoint of Symbols of Authority, which can mean little else in his case than to submit it to an evaluation ultimately Marxist. Or he likes to ring the changes on a rhetorical device by showing how it is at the heart of a variety of complex literary passages. Thus in *Counter-Statement* with great irrelevance he reduces scenes from Racine's *Iphigénie* and Wilde's *Salome*, and verses from 'We Are Seven', together with other specimens, to the trick of 'talking at cross-purposes'. And in his later work he has pointed to the ancient device of what he calls (under a new name in an intricately worked out schema) the 'Act-Scene ratio' as if its mere presence in a poem or play were enough to explain the range of the work's complexities. (The Act-Scene ratio is that tendency of an act and a scene in which it occurs to share a common imagery towards mutual re-enforcement of a common mood). And he has a tendency to consider later works of a writer as successive rewritings of some earlier work: thus, *Mario the Magician* is a rewriting of *Death in Venice*. Too much cannot be made of any one of these things, but together they provide Burke's criticism with an aspect I would call 'mechanical', for Burke uses these methods, not with any sensitive care for the life of the poem, but with the hope of getting beyond the poem entirely into a realm of loosely disciplined symbolism in which he can seek another kind of life and other kinds of satisfactions.

3. This glance at Burke's theory of Poetry as Act and at his conception of the critic's function does not go far in explaining that restlessness and energy that is characteristic of all his writing, and it leaves unnoticed one of the most insistent defects in his work: a monotonous absence of shade and highlight that reduces all of Burke's ideas to a monochrome significance. A book by Burke teems with local activity. Ideas scurry everywhere, and one watches them with something of the fascination with which one studies the combination of aimlessness and purpose that characterizes life in an ant hill. Just how exalted Burke's final purpose really is one realizes only gradually; but how he has laboured the means of reaching it is evident from the first. The greatest point of internal strain in Burke's ideological structure—and the strain is, after all, one of the chief results of all that labour—occurs in an area where two such passages as are quoted below, attempting to collaborate in a final vision of Burke's design, end up by mutually frustrating each other.

First, as illustrating the essential seriousness of his intentions, one could point to this passage from a recent essay:

> 'But if one offered a synthesis of the fields covered by the various disciplines, which of the disciplines could possibly be

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> competent to evaluate it? Where each specialty gets its worth precisely by moving towards diversity, how could any specialty possibly deal with a project that offered a *unification* among the diversities? Or, otherwise put: if one were to write on the interrelatedness among ten specialties, one would be discussing something that lay outside the jurisdiction of them all'.

It might be noted from the tone of this passage that theology would seem to be the only ground in which the desiderated unification might occur, although we know that such a unification for Burke would be achieved ultimately in a society 'in which the participant aspect of action attained its maximum expression', a society which he naturally visualizes as Marxist. The passage is further noteworthy as indicating the incapacity of his conception of literary criticism to act as a central discipline—but perhaps it is unfair to stress that point here since the passage ends on an inflection suggesting the desire is for an ontological reality different in nature from a mere evaluating discipline. The seriousness of tone is hardly short of religious. In another place, distressed by the confusion caused to-day by overlapping 'interpretative frames' in our society, Burke has asked 'What arises as a totality?' And he continues: 'The myriad orientations will be tragically wasted, the genius of one of the world's most vigorous centuries will be allowed to go unused, unless we can adapt its very welter of interpretations as sceptical grounding for our certainties'. The nervousness one feels in the fabric of Burke's writing, then, springs from his necessity of basing his certainties on uncertainties; and the fact that he is religiously solemn about the first, and lacks both the humour and the critical tact to dismiss the second with any assurance does not relieve the tension. But if Burke's readers suffer as a result, certainly Burke suffers more.

As contrasted with the first passage, the one below from *Permanence and Change* exhibits Burke bringing the uncertainties under control. Although it springs from the highly serious purpose just commented upon it demonstrates why so much of Burke's writing seems to end in frivolity, and to express a defective sensibility. The passage is an explanation of a phrase Burke frequently employs, 'perspective by incongruity'. Burke traces the phrase to Nietzsche, and he may also be indebted to Remy de Gourmont's dissociation of conceptual words which he discusses in *Counter-Statement*. 'Perspective by incongruity' is in itself a highly useful device. It operates in something of the manner of a metaphysical image that by collocating unexpected items is capable of providing new and unusual insights; or, by division on the same principle, may reveal unsuspected weaknesses in accepted formulations. Here is the passage:

> ' . . . we might say that planned incongruity should be deliberately cultivated for the purpose of experimentally wrenching apart all those molecular combinations of adjective and noun, substantive and verb, which still remain with us. It should

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subject language to the same "cracking" process that chemists now use in their refining of oil . . . An idea which commonly carries with it diminutive modifiers, for instance, should be treated by magnification, as were one to discuss the heinousness of an extra slice of beef, or the brain storm that rules when one has stumped one's toe. One should be prepared to chart the genesis, flourishing, and decay of a family witticism, precisely as though he were concerned with the broadest aspects of cultural change, basic patterns of psychology and history thus being conveniently brought within the scope of the laboratory. One should study one's dog for his Napoleonic qualities, or observe mosquitoes for signs of wisdom to which we are forever closed. One should discuss sneezing in terms heretofore reserved for the analysis of a brilliant invention, as if it were a creative act, a vast synthesis uniting in its simple self a multitude of prior factors. Conversely, when the accepted linkages have been of an imposing sort, one should establish perspective by looking through the reverse end of his glass, converting mastodons into microbes, or human beings into vermin upon the face of the earth. Or perhaps writing a history of medicine by a careful study of the quacks, one should, by the principle of the *lex continui*, extend his observations until they threw light upon the processes of Pasteur. Or do a history of poetry by going among the odds and ends of Bohemia, asking oneself why some monkey jumper wore a flowing tie, and letting the answer serve as an explanation of Yeats or Valéry'.

The kind of reversal being considered here only degrades the idea of 'perspective by incongruity'. The passage has a faded whimsicality that, so far from being original, has been exploited for many generations by middlebrow essayists who, in little after dinner gems of literature, have waxed solemn about their opera hats or frivolous about their great-aunts' funerals. So far from these distortions effecting new insights there is something about the tone in which Burke marshals them forward that rigidifies the sensibility in an old response at the very moment it should be most receptive to something new. But more important, the impersonal scientific metaphor with which the papagraph opens is unjustifiable. Any 'perspective by incongruity' would be a highly personal thing, since only *certain* terms would be chosen by any one person to be broken down in a *certain* way. The sensibility and wishes of the subject forming such a perspective would be an important factor, and inevitably his perspective would converge at some point previously proposed in some level of his consciousness. It is clear that such a method has great possibilities for a Marxist critic undertaking an interpretation of literature in relation to Symbols of Authority, and here one realizes with a start that the only shocking item in the above list—the last item—is the one by which Burke would be least shocked. The Bohemian's flowing tie as a romantic symbol of caste and function in a capitalist society would undoubtedly perform services similar to the ones Yeats' 'aristocratic' attitudes and imagery performed for him, and such services, we

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shall see, Burke considers one of the chief functions of literature. It is even a little odd that Burke should consider such an item as his last one a 'perspective by incongruity' at all.

By juxtaposing these two passages one sees Burke deeply concerned with certainties that he is both eager to realize himself and to propagate. One knows that the only tangible certainty he admits is a political one, but this, in all its ramifications, constitutes the 'good life'. He has a strong religious nostalgia, and it confers a solemn authority of tone on his ultimate goal. And as the religious sensibility is particularly sensitive to scepticism one sees him 'transcending' this weakness by behaving like a sceptic himself: and he toils away in the second passage among the contemporary uncertainties, using a neutral critical device, but in the somewhat weighted way that theologians sometimes make their appeals to secular subjects. In the end, his 'perspective by incongruity' converges on a Heavenly City that is not very new considering the circuitous approach he has chosen; and the deep earnestness of that final end, blunting a multitude of intermediary perceptions, is happy to tolerate frequent collapses of literary criticism into the lower regions of polemic. But I must apologize at this point for so largely presuming on the question of the religious inflection. I can only point ahead to a further stage when I shall attempt to isolate this tone more carefully.

III.

Against this general background it should now be possible to consider relevantly three central problems in Burke's criticism: (1) the manner in which he numerically individuates poems; (2) the practical way in which he translates a poem into Symbolic Action; and (3) the way he analyses Symbolic Action in terms of ritual.

1. By the problem of individuation is meant the manner in which a poem may claim to be itself. Does it exist by virtue of an ultimately inviolable identity, or does it possess its final and finest meaning *only* in terms of an organization of principles (however complex) that can be wholly explained away? Burke seems to wish to explain the poem entirely in terms of principles—at least the poem insofar as it exists as a verbal object. He can always, of course, step across the threshold into the Symbolic Act and confront such an accusation with the reply that he is actually stressing the dramatistic content, the human aspect of poetry; but I wish to suggest later that the transition is a questionable one as he effects it, and that meantime the verbal structure of the poem has been violated by the assumption that it can be mechanically explained in its totality. He wishes to achieve this reduction by bringing principles to an ever-narrowing focus within the poem until any area of uniqueness is destroyed.

The problem is, of course, a metaphysical one, and Burke takes full advantage of this fact to so adjust the terms of controversy that he is able (with no justification) to call any critic using the term

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'unique' a nominalist. Or, at any rate, his justification lies in unduly extending the grounds of the term 'unique' until it embraces literally everything in a poem. He blandly assumes that such critics inevitably confuse the terms 'unique' and 'intrinsic', which is no more true than that most critics who consider Byron's human personality unique would also add that his 'bleeding heart', considered merely as a physical organ, required any other kind of individuation than that conferred by quantitative extension. At this point one is up against a definition of what the human personality is, and one feels more than ever how wrong Mr. Hyman was in the passage quoted earlier to attack the discreet Mr. Wilson for preferring *not* to consider these problems when he was trying to consider literature. But Burke forces metaphysical issues with a rashness that is all the greater when one considers how little he himself has settled the problem of personality. A puzzling ambiguity prevails in all his books. It is difficult to perceive at what level of final definition Burke employs the word 'identity', but it is not, in any eventuality, reassuring when he turns from a discussion of this subject to quote as an authority Mr. Harold Laski on social pluralism. And in the same volume he refuses *not* to believe in immortality lest he should be accused of fearing Hell. But the dilemma with which he is faced is perhaps most vividly summed up in the following paragraph from his essay, 'The Problem of the Intrinsic', which is his principal statement on the subject of individuating poems:

> 'Indeed, the question as to what a thing is "in itself" is not a scientific question at all (in the purely empiricist sense of the term), but a philosophical or metaphysical one. Recently, for instance, there appeared a very intelligent book by a contemporary psychiatrist, Dr. Andras Angyal, entitled *Foundations for a Science of Personality*. But opening it, one finds the entire first half of this project for a "science" of personality constructed about the relationships between "organism" and "environment", two terms that in their very nature *dissolve* the concept of personality by reducing it to non-personal terms. Strictly speaking, the expression "science of personality" is a contradiction in terms, a "perspective by incongruity". For "personality" (derived from a word referring to a man's role) is a "dramatist" concept, and as such involves philosophical or metaphysical notions of human identity. But a "science" of personality would be evolved by translating matters of personality into terms wholly outside the personal as the biologistic terms "organism" and "environment" are outside the personal). I do not say there cannot be a "science" of the personality, for Dr. Angyal's valuable book goes a long way towards showing that there can be. (Or at least it shows that there can be a "scientific terminology" of the personality). I am trying to suggest that such a science is totally "extrinsic" in its approach, not aiming to consider the philosophic problem of what the personality is "in itself", but perfectly at home in a vocabulary that simply dissolves the person into a non-person'.

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The most astonishing thing about this is the concluding line. It is impossible to think of a more deadly violation of the integrity of personality (once conceding it exists) than a scheme designed to dissolve the person into the non-person. I cannot think of any contributions a 'scientific terminology' of the personality might make towards refining life and knowledge if it were to be based on so fundamental a denial. But what I wish to point out here is that since a poem may be taken as an extension of the poet's personality, Dr. Angyal's 'science of personality' and Kenneth Burke's literary criticism both participate in an 'extrinsic' approach about which Burke, at least, is far from feeling easy. In apologizing for Dr. Angyal he is really apologizing for himself, and in doing so he reveals the weaknesses of his own criticism. For Burke abstracts the Act from the poem in a series of operations, or applications of a 'scientific terminology', that simply dissolves the verbal structure (the shell of the Act) into a series of principles. Remembering an earlier quotation given here from Burke, one might say that he would explain the final unity of the poem in terms of its diversities. (The diversities, in that event, would be the 'environment' of the final unity). One recalls, from the same quotation, this further statement: 'if one were to write on the *interrelatedness* among ten specialties, one would be discussing something that lay outside the jurisdiction of them all'. To make an application of Burke's words that was not intended, one might say that it is this final unification among all the possible diversities in a poem—a unification that is finally explained *only* in terms of the poet's personality, and which is greater than any of its parts, and which gives meaning to all its parts—that most critics refer to when they say a poem is unique.

Whether, theoretically, the Symbolic Act of a poem, if educed and interpreted with great tact and discretion, yet always regarded as having significant existence for the literary critic *only* in the particular words themselves and nowhere else—whether or not such an Act would then be capable of bridging the gap in Burke's criticism between the deadening work of his principles operating within the verbal structure and the full vitality of the Symbolic Drama he conceives as overriding everything is a question that is answered by no practical examples in his volumes. The Symbolic Act so conceived *might* become a satisfactory way of approaching the uniqueness of a poem, but it would require a different kind of sensibility than Burke's to demonstrate the fact.

I am very conscious, however, that there are many passages in Burke that seem to attribute a complexity to a poem that might appear at variance with some of the criticisms I have been making. For example, he can write:

> 'Every act is a miracle, a synthesis that can be reduced to an infinity of components. For if it is by shrewd words that we dispel the mystery, and since every act fuses in a spontaneous instant to a complexity of factors that could not be verbally extricated in a lifetime, it follows that every act is a miracle'.

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There is no satisfactory indication here of what the nature of the 'fusing' act would be, and Burke's scattered discussions of what he calls the Symbolic Merger are ultimately elusive. It is noticeable that the word 'miracle', and the magical image of dispelling mystery by shrewd words, are further emotive bridgings between Burke's sense of the part personality plays in literature and how little a 'scientific terminology' can in the end compass its effects. The kind of complexity that Burke here predicates of a poem has the sheer quantitative advantage that characterizes Richards' conception of a poem (at work in the sensibility) as an infinity of little swinging weights, capable of being added to indefinitely as new complexities arise. But in Burke's case as a whole the issues are complicated by the intrusion of what Richards would call the 'animistic' temptation. However, if Burke were content to let matters rest at the level of the passage just quoted there would be little cause to complain. But after such a general accolade to a poem's complexity as he gives here, Burke feels free to go ahead and 'extricate' whatever he likes in the time allowed him. Since he completely lacks the fine critical distinction of Richards, the results are usually unsatisfactory and sometimes even ludicrous.

2. By saying that a poem is a constitutive act, a verbal object enduring in other temporal scenes than that in which it was first created, Burke probably means that the Act *is* fully contained in the words of the poem—it is difficult to be quite sure in view of his practice. But whether or not the literary quality, the verbal distinction of a poem, has anything at all to do with constituting the reality of the Act is a problem never touched on. The examination of the Symbolic Act which it will now be necessary to undertake will force the conclusion that the Act has nothing whatever to do with the literary distinction of the poem, and is useless in any attempt at practical evaluation. The most complete statement of Burke's theory of Symbolic Act is in *The Philosophy of Literary Form*. Burke submits it there to a long panoramic survey, but the only point there will be space to mention here is his gruesome substitution of the word 'statistical' for 'symbolic', an additional indication of his habit of thinking of vital processes in terms that submit them to a radical reduction. By 'statistical' he means something similar to Caroline Spurgeon's indexing of images. By counting image clusters and psycho-analysing them he arrives at the psychological urgencies behind the composition, and these urgencies, since the neurological structure is unchanging, may be generalized into certain symbolic acts with individual modifications, according to the neuroses of the individual. Extensive biographical material must, naturally, be drawn on. Now tactfully employed such a procedure, which is by no means original with Burke, might occasionally prove enlightening in elucidating some novel or poem. To take a recent example, Lional Trilling in his introduction to *The Princess Casamassima* has, in one passage, drawn to good purpose on James' relations with his brother and sister, and he has shown how, in a particular way, this led to an

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artistic identification between James and Hyacinth Robinson. But Mr. Trilling has used these observations with great diffidence, and solely as a literary critic. The result is that the structure of the novel gains an additional clarification, and we are drawn more fully into its intentions as a work of art, but never as a case history. How little Burke may be expected to exercise a similar tact is clear when he writes in *Attitudes toward History*: 'If a writer speaks of life on a mountain, for instance, we start with the impertinent question, "What is he talking about?" We automatically assume that he is *not* talking about life on a mountain . . . ' It is true that Burke adds in parentheses '(not talking *only* about that)', but I think the emphasis he wishes to make is quite clear.

But one had better, without further discussion, look at some samples of what Burke offers as Symbolic Action. One might take up, for example, the symbolic structure he finds in *Murder in the Cathedral*. An extended analysis occurs under this announcement of intentions: 'A work on Thomas the Saint, by Thomas the Poet, the Saint Louis boy who was too good for Saint Louis (why shouldn't he be!) Concerned with the royal road to God'. The central meaning of the Symbolic Act that Burke finds in the play is a sacrificial change of identity in Mr. Eliot, whose critical self slays his poetical self, and promises to do so every day with a daily resurrection of the poetic self 'towards nightfall'. This process is deeply involved in Burke's idea of how the Missouri boy finally managed to outwit the God of elegance by 'transcending' him, but there is no need to go into that story here. A much clearer illustration of the process of educting the Symbolic Act may be derived from his analysis of Nathan and Charles Reznikoff's *Early History of a Sewing Machine Operator*. This is the paragraph up for consideration:

> 'When I came into the house, she [my chum's mother] said, "Come, sit near the stove and warm yourself". Her husband looked at me sideways, out of his angry eyes, and went on chanting the psalms—not sorrowfully as my father and others did. When my chum's father came to the verse, "I lift mine eyes to the hills whence comes my help", he lifted his eyes, but saw the barrels of whisky he had for sale'.

The only notable thing about this passage is its complete lack of any distinction. It is only a piece of flavourless reporting, but Burke makes quite a thing out of it. He paraphrases the first sentence in the passage in the following manner:

> 'I identified myself with my chum closely enough to think of entering his community. When I changed my identity by entering his community (the house) the mother-symbol of that community said to me, "Come near me (in my associated form, the warm stove) and feel prosperous" '.

The second sentence he symbolically translates as:

> 'The father-symbol that belonged to this new identity did not like the mother-symbol's offer that I should share her. This was

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symbolic incest. He meanwhile was proclaiming his identity, with respect to membership in a still wider community. But his words of affection were belied by his manner. He was a *bad* member of his community. He alienated me in my attempt at identification'.

The third sentence Burke translates after this fashion:

'When the father-symbol of my new identity was proclaiming in turn his identity, and came to the verse, "I look guiltily and beseechingly at the mystery of *my* mother, whence comes my prosperity", he looked not *beseechingly*, but with *brutal boldness*. And no wonder; for he had made of her a whore. Her belly is accordingly caricatured as a barrel—and he offers it for sale. It very properly contains a purely material kind of exaltation to be derived from *alcohol*. And in selling it, by a purely *quantitative* test of profit, he arrived at the monetary caricature of religion'.

Perhaps no comment is necessary. At any rate, one clearly sees what R. P. Blackmur meant when he remarked in *The Double Agent* that it was impossible to make value distinctions with Burke's system. Burke replied in *The Philosophy of Literary Form* by saying: 'You can't properly put Marie Corelli and Shakespeare apart until you have first put them together. First genus, then differentia'. Apart from being a silly way in which to formulate a principle that, apparently, he holds very seriously, one might object that for a literary critic he has postponed the consideration of the differentiæ an uncommonly long time. He is supposed to follow up *A Grammar of Motives* with a *Rhetoric* and a *Symbolic of Motives*, the latter being a critical consideration of the motives of the creative act. But if the differentiæ succeed in getting themselves evaluated there it will not be in terms of Burke's 'methodology' as it has so far been used by him.

The essay 'Symbolic Action in an Ode by Keats' is Burke's most successful analysis of a poem, and his most famous piece. It attempts to resolve the 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty' antagonism of an 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' within a highly interpretative framework, equating beauty with poetry and truth with science, and merging them together in an Act-Scene ratio in a final act of transcendence. 'Transcendence' was defined somewhere in Burke as an adoption of another point of view from which opposites cease to be opposites. Cleanth Brooks in *The Well Wrought Urn* arrived less brilliantly but much more convincingly at somewhat similar conclusions about the Ode, and if a simpler interpretation of it continues to recommend itself to me, it is still not on the grounds of final disagreement with its conclusions that I wish to examine Burke's essay here. The important question is to what degree the Symbolic Act that Burke finds in the Ode is subtly suggested by gratuitous contributions of tone and cross associations. The essay contains several very good things, especially in the second half, but it is the larger critical strategy that must be considered here. Near the

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end of the essay Burke remarks that the *Ode* 'begins with an ambiguous fever'. 'Fever', even at this late stage in his essay, is a heavily weighted word to describe what is occurring in the first stanza. This 'fever', which is the ground of the Symbolic Act in the poem as Burke interprets it, has been suggested by the closing lines of the first stanza, and by finding in the second stanza a double motivational level in the 'pipes and timbrel' theme. Here, in the region of the 'mystic oxymoron' (another highly charged phrase) where melodies are unheard and pipes play ditties of no tone, Burke suggests that Keats is reaching out towards the absolute. He is 'meditating upon absolute *sound*, the *essence* of sound, which would be soundless as the prime mover is motionless . . . ' Burke then discusses the arrested 'pre-ecstacy' of the last four lines, and carries on into the third stanza where the so-called 'fever' divides into a 'transcendental fever, which is felicitous, divinely above "all human breathing passion" ', and an 'earthly fever' that 'leaves a burning forehead and parching tongue'. 'From the bodily fever, which is a passion, and malign, there has split off a spiritual activity, a wholly benign aspect of the total agitation'. An extended analysis of the last two stanzas exhibits the final confirmation of this transcendence in the Scene-Act ratio.

Now this is an elaborate interpretation and would require, to justify itself, constant reference to the text. But in actual fact Burke makes hardly more pointed references to the poem as a word structure than has been made in the above brief paraphrase. In order to see clearly how little contact there is between the poem and Burke's analysis one should, by a kind of double entry criticism, place Burke's most persuasive arguments in one column and note the points where those arguments really touch the text in an opposite column. But that would be an extended essay in itself, and the most that can be done here is to remark that between the very inconclusive paragraphs in which Burke discusses the words themselves, the Symbolic Act slips most comfortably into the poem itself by means of certain tricky passages that Burke uses in the manner of forensic shoehorns. In interpreting the second stanza of the *Ode* Burke appears in the following paragraph very much like a Greek bearing gifts of meaning to the original sense:

> 'Add, now, our knowledge of the poem's place as an enactment in a particular cultural scene, and we likewise note in this second stanza a variant of the identification between death and sexual love that was so typical of nineteenth-century romanticism and was to attain its musical monument in the Wagnerian *Liebestod*. On a purely dialectical basis, to die in love would be to be born in love (the lovers dying as individual identities that they might be transformed into a common identity). Adding historical factors, one can note the part that capitalist individualism plays in sharpening this consummation (since a property structure that heightens the sense of individual identity would thus make it more imperiously a "death" for the individual to take on the new identity made by the union of two). We can

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thus see why the love-death equation would be particularly representative of a romanticism that was the reflex of business'.

The 'fever', which is the *sine qua non* of this Symbolic Act, was more or less assumed in the first stanza, and here it begins to be incarnated in an emotional image of romantic love-death drawn out of a Marxist interpretation of the economic environment in which the poem was composed. It is worth noting that the Wagnerian music acts very persuasively in making the transition from the economic background to the particular symbology of the Act. And here, incidentally, one might stop to wonder if Burke really likes the *Ode* at all. He might be expected to dislike it as an expression of capitalism, for commenting on capitalist 'snobbism' in *Attitudes toward History* Burke remarked: 'The body was "vile" and the mind was "pure" and eventually vile body would attain the spirituality of pure mind. People now seem to hope that such a "transcendence" shall be done here on earth by machinery'. According to Burke's interpretation of the *Ode* the transcendence it achieves is precisely of this kind, and from one point of view Burke might even consider it, in his frame of things, as a preparatory exercise for moving on to other kinds of transcendence by machines. Speaking further of machines Burke has said: 'There will be no better day until a socialist society will have been established long enough for its citizens to lose their reverence for these exploitative playthings'. Paradoxically enough, it is even conceivable that Burke's 'good society' would have no more place for Keats' *Ode* than for machinery. But to return more particularly to the essay: having deposited the central motive or 'fever' of the Symbolic Act in a deceptively concrete image of romantic love-death, Burke clinches the relation between love-death and private property (perhaps in this way Burke really means to rescue the *Ode* for Communism after all, making love-death transcend private property) by an appeal to the 'unimpeachable authority' of Shakespeare's 'The Phoenix and the Turtle'. Whatever else this does (a point that is vague to me), it provides him with its 'pun on sexual burning' to add to the original relationship, and so endow the final transcendence with a highly emotive passion. This 'sexual burning' naturally leads into the question of Keats' tubercular fever and his love for Fanny Brawne. An appropriate passage is quoted from one of Keats' letters to his mistress, stressing the connection in his mind between fever and love, and there follows a discussion of the poet's illness. 'Whatever transformations of mind and body he experienced, his illness was there as a kind of constitutional substrate . . . ' Additional letters are quoted to show that Keats used his sickness to write poetry 'somewhat as Hart Crane could write poetry only by modes of living that . . . led to his dissolution'. Burke then sums up what he has been saying in this part of his argument with another shoehorn passage:

'Speaking of agents, patients, and action here, we might pause to glance back over the centuries thus: in the Aristotelian

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grammar of motives, action has its reciprocal in passion, hence *passion* is the property of a *patient*. But by the Christian paradox (which made the martyr's action identical with his passion, as the accounts of the martyrs were called both Acts and Passionals), patience is the property of a moral *agent*. And this Christian view, as secularized in the philosophy of romanticism, with its stress upon creativeness, leads us to the possibility of a bodily suffering redeemed by a poetic act'.

Thus Burke concludes the first stage in his construction of the *Ode's* Symbolic Act—the establishment of a kind of 'fever' or motive composed of intellectual or spiritual action and bodily passion capable of being separated in a particular way. The above paragraph ends this part of the argument on the very note that Burke, for his purposes, had to make as explicit as possible, and yet we have arrived at it, not in terms of the first two stanzas, but in terms of certain generalizations about romantic love-death in the nineteenth century, and further generalizations about private property; we have been given two stanzas from a poem by Shelley, and two stanzas from 'The Phoenix and the Turtle; we have seen the Symbolic Act taking shape under pressure of Hart Crane's death, and in terms of a discussion of Keats' illness, with quotations from his letters, and in terms of his love affair, with additional quotations from the letters. Finally we came to the first pause in the argument with the paragraph just quoted, out of the quicker-than-eye manœuvring of which 'a bodily suffering redeemed by a poetic act' is lifted as a rabbit from a hat—and we cannot press back the conviction that it is presented to us on behalf of a progression of inevitable critical discoveries within the poem itself. And we have in the middle of it all Burke's customary statement of the purity of his critical intentions: ' . . . linguistic analysis has opened up new possibilities in the correlating of producer and product—and these concerns have such important bearing upon matters of culture and conduct in general that no sheer conventions or ideals of criticism should be allowed to interfere with their development', a statement with which, at certain levels, one might agree with strongly enough to neglect an investigation of what Burke means by the 'sheer conventions or ideals of criticism'. It is significant that out of the three-and-a-half pages devoted to the first two stanzas, only a page-and-a-half is concerned with the actual text, and this includes the space taken up (a full third) by reprinting the two stanzas. The remainder is devoted to the information that has been outlined here. This takes the essay through only a third of its length, but there is no space for a more extended comment on it, and perhaps my point has already been too much laboured.

3. It will have become clear by this time how Symbolic Action is interpreted as ritual. Burke has frequent and extended discussions on the nature of ritualism in his books, and anyone interested in this aspect of his criticism should turn to the chapters, 'Ritual Drama as the Hub', in *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, and 'The General Nature of Ritual', in *Attitudes toward History*. The idea

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of literature as ritual is probably based on the ritualistic function of Greek drama. American writers have become very fond of quoting from the books of the classical anthropologists at Cambridge. However, I cannot throw off the suspicion that Burke's own sense of ritual is merely an extension, in terms of modern anthropology, of the old religiose-æsthetic tradition of nineteenth-century England. I have already quoted in relation to Burke Richards' somewhat disinfected phrase. Richards, it will be recalled, was much aware (in others) of those 'temptations to revert to animism from which psychologists, and especially literary psychologists, suffer'. Burke's prolonged dickering with this problem has resulted in a tone already familiar to most readers. In *Counter-Statement* he has an enthusiastic essay on Pater, and anyone who takes the trouble to reread *Marius the Epicurean* after finishing with Burke's volumes will be surprised at the resemblance which, if very spotty, is sometimes deep. Here, for example, is a passage from *Marius*:

> 'There were days when he could suspect, though it was a suspicion he was careful at first to put from him, that that early, much cherished religion of the villa might come to count with him as but one form of poetic beauty, or of the ideal, in things; as but one voice, in a world where there were many voices it would be a moral weakness not to listen to. And yet this voice, through its forcible preoccupation of his childish conscience, still seemed to make a claim of a quite exclusive character, defining itself as one of but two possible leaders of his spirit, the other proposing to him unlimited self-expansion in a world of various sunshine. The contrast was so pronounced as to make the easy, light-hearted, unsuspecting exercise of himself among the temptations of the new phase of life which had now begun, seem nothing less than a rival *religion*, a rival *religious* service'.

And here is a passage from Burke:

> 'Might the great plethora of symbolizations lead, through the science of symbolism itself, back to a concern with "the Way", the old notion of Tao, the conviction that there is one fundamental course of human satisfaction, forever being glimpsed and lost again, and forever being restated in the changing terms of reference that correspond with the changes of historic texture. All that earlier thinkers said of the *universe* might at least be taken as applying to the nature of man. One may doubt that such places as heaven, hell, and purgatory await us after death—but one may well suspect that the psychological patterns which they symbolize lie at the roots of our conduct here and now'.

Such similarity as exists between these passages is based on a somewhat scheming scepticism of temperament endeavouring to over-reach its secular plainness by clothing itself in the emotive garb of a mystagogic vocabulary safely disengaged from any real theological substance; and any rigorous conclusions about the nature of personality are avoided by comforting generalizations that

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might be classified as examples of eating one's cake and having it too. But Burke, due to the advances in psychology and anthropology that have taken place since Pater's death, is able to make poetry into 'a rival *religion*, a rival *religious* service', with a completeness that might even have shocked the elder man. I do not wish to go into a detailed discussion of Burke's ritualistic literary practices here, but they are more or less summed up by his assertion: 'Our basic principle is that all symbolism can be treated as the ritualistic naming and changing of identity (whereby a man fits himself for a role in accordance with established co-ordinates or for a change of role in accordance with new co-ordinates which necessity has forced upon him)'. He proceeds to show that 'these rituals of change or "purification" centre about three kinds of imagery: purification by ice, by fire, or by decay. "Ice" tends to emphasize castration and frigidity . . . Purification by fire . . . probably suggests "incest awe" ', and so on. Great faith in this sort of thing leads Burke to such irrelevant groupings as *The Waste Land* with Dos Passos' *The Big Money* on the basis of their imagery of desiccation.

I should not, however, wish to offer a criticism here of the kinds of activity Burke sees as going on within a poem. That is a subject too large to come, properly, within the scope of any essay on Burke. The most one can do is to criticize the vocabulary with which he endeavours to compass these operations, and to note the kind of deflection implicit in it. The changes of identity, the scapegoat, etc., would all seem to be somewhat pretentious extensions of catharsis fancied up by an occult overlay. Since a good part of Burke's vocabulary is based on primitive ritual there may be some risk in using the word 'occult' here. Classical anthropology exercises powerful prerogatives in contemporary criticism, whose exponents frequently seem to think that its myths and symbols can be lugged over from their original context to the present time with all their magic intact—a state of mind that suggests not only a collapse of the historical sense but an incredible simplification of the nature of man. In introducing Pater I have already implied what I mean in saying that Burke's vocabulary deflects his fundamental meanings towards the occult, but it is a statement that requires rounding out in these closing paragraphs. In *Counter-Statement* he accused those critics who believe in a unique correspondence between meaning and rhythm and rhythm and imagery in a poem of being quasi-mystics; but quasi-mystical is exactly what I should be inclined to call a paragraph such as the following which describes the artist's symbolic suicide and emergence in the poem as a new self carrying on in a new role:

> 'Since the symbolic transformation involves a sloughing off, you may expect to find some variant of killing in the work. (I treat indictment, vituperation, vindictiveness against a "villain", etc., as attenuated aspects of this same function). So we get to the "scapegoat", the "representative" or "vessel" of certain unwanted evils, the sacrificial animal upon whose back the burden

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of these evils is ritualistically loaded. He becomes "charismatic" (if we may incongruously extend this word beyond the purely "benign" category into the "malign" category). We are now brought into the area of tragedy, the "goat-song"—and may profitably recall that, whereas in primitive societies, the purifying function could be ritualistically delegated to an animal, as societies grew in social complexity and sophistication, the tendency was to endow the sacrificial animal with social co-ordinates, so that the goat became replaced by the "sacrificial King" '.

In order to give special point to this quotation one should have the space to follow it up with several examples of the 'transformations' that Burke sees going on in literature, but only one must serve. Joyce, for whom Burke has an especial esteem, has been able, Burke believes, to become during the course of his writing (and as a result of his writing) a genuine physical scapegoat in a way denied to men of lesser genius. Speaking of Joyce's blindness, Burke observes:

> 'Modern medicine sufficiently recognizes a correspondence between our attitudes and our physical disabilities for one to feel justified in relating Joyce's misfortunes, as well as his attainments, to his intense skill at heretically disintegrating his childhood meanings . . . This conflict between his earliest pieties and the reclassifications that went with his later perspective could, in a man whose responses are so thorough, result in a mental concern with a disintegration which would have physical counterparts'.

If one is able to get by this (the chief difficulty with such observations in Burke is the indiscriminate and facile ease with which he hands them out), the irritation one feels becomes sharper a moment later when he begins to talk about 'The self-imposed blindness of Oedipus who had outraged the most awesome pieties of his tribe'. The occult closes in and leaves one with a superstitious and religiose sense of what a strange thing literature is, and what a fine Established Church it could become if taken over by the right kind of social organization.

Basing his observation on the fact that it had already returned to Santa Claus, Burke expressed his belief in the 'thirties in Russia's imminent return to God. One might think that his consistent choice of theological metaphors (it has been convenient to stress his classical-ritualistic metaphors here, but a Christian terminology is also abundantly present) was at least equally suggestive of some such orientation on his part. But we have seen that in Burke all things tend towards a Marxist end. In that technological 'frame of acceptance' into which Burke sees our society plunging, salvation may be achieved by a 'corrective philosophy' that ordinarily would be a religious one. But

> ' . . . in a world which has lost its faith in transcendental revelation, the poetic metaphor enables us to start from a point of reference wherein the "revelation" is of a secular nature: the

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> biologic assertion itself. Projecting the metaphor by analogical extension, we find that the entire universe again takes life, as a mighty drama still in progress. And even if we are led to fear that this drama is essentially tragic, the poetic metaphor reminds us that in a perfect tragedy there is a "catharsis", hence we may be heartened to inquire what form this catharsis may take'.

The 'catharsis', of course, takes form in the 'participant aspect of action' achieved through the poetic metaphor in a Communist society. Hence, in conformity with this picture literature will be distorted to scale, and a religiose approach to it will decidedly help. But this religiose aspect of literature will not be confined to an emotive colouring of vocabulary. It is seen as performing the functions reserved in more polite societies for the Sacrament of Penance (the sloughing off of the old identity), the Sacrament of Baptism (the taking on of a new name), and communion with the faithful in the Mystical Body (socialization of impulses in the ultimately Communist state). I hardly know whether to think of Burke as a literary critic or as the High Priest of a new critical liturgicism.

These remarks have been sufficiently extended to make an elaborate conclusion unnecessary. Under whatever other aspects than that of a literary critic (and Burke shows up better under these other aspects) he may be considered, his chief importance in this favoured role lies in his representative quality, and in his influence. He might easily become the archetypal pattern for an unfortunate trend in American criticism, a trend that would place literature against a background of sciences rather than in a traditional social (as opposed to socialist) context, that would expunge words from literature at the very moment it seemed to be giving them detailed attention, that would consider literature as a bag of vicarious satisfactions at the very moment it called it 'equipment for living', and arranging the discoveries of literary criticism from the viewpoint of purpose (Burke calls this 'teleological criticism') would have the purpose carefully selected before the criticism was undertaken. There may be nothing wrong with Burke's ideas beyond the way he uses them. For the most part they are not new ideas, but new formulations of ideas arranged in relation to each other with astonishing internal consistency. But any critical vocabulary so highly organized, no matter how desperately it may reach out towards flexibility, has misunderstood the nature of literature and rigidified the sensibility of the critic in certain set responses. Burke has condemned traditional critical vocabularies in terms similar to these, but surely his own is at least as guilty, if in slightly different ways. 'Poetry as Act' purports to emphasize the ethical aspects of literature, and to set poetry in the mid-arena of life. As Burke practices the theory the poem itself is too often the flunkey of the Act to whom it administers in a servile capacity, and life ends up by being where Burke would like it to be—in short, Poetry and Life collide at the enchanted turn-stile of Marxism.

MARIUS BEWLEY.

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INTELLECTUAL LIFE IN THE U.S.A.

COMMENT AND REPLY

I TAKE it that Mr. Mason's somewhat ambiguous theme[1] is the 'fundamental similarity of the plight of the intellectual in the U.S.A. and in England'. I take it, further, that readers of *Scrutiny* would be interested in exploring, by a criss-cross of 'notes'. the clear similarities and differences of English and American intellectuals—at least those intellectuals belonging, let us say, to the critical-creative-cultural professional group—with a view to discovering, if not 'civilization-wide unity', at least some common ground between *Scrutiny* and similar American periodicals.

One must admit in all fairness, before singling out Mr. Mason's article for specific criticism, that *Scrutiny's* criticism of the American scene, much of it undertaken by Mr. Mason himself, has, on the whole, been better than that of any other English periodical. Here and there its judgments have been questionable. It has tended to overlook Dos Passos's major distortions in his reading of American social classes by calling attention to what he does well only incidentally, *i.e.*, the background against which his dramas are set rather mechanically in motion is authentic and works by accumulation of detail. It has failed to appreciate Faulkner's comparative grasp of American history of the south and his firm understanding of contemporary southern society. It has not given Hart Crane fair treatment, and has failed in recent years to report American poetry and novels. But on the whole it has kept the English public rather well informed about the American literary, cultural and educational scene.

But much remains to be done, and Mr. Mason's article offers a convenient point of departure. First, some general criticisms. Simone de Beauvoir's impressions must, surely, be considered relatively irresponsible. Again, to encourage one's audience to supply imaginatively the details for the cocktail parties of one or many of the New York literary journals, without the necessary explicitness, is dangerously to teach one's own critics an easy trick. As one detail in a complex cultural picture, *its limits clearly defined*, it might help towards an understanding of New York City intellectual life. Then, too, the political situation in New York is, admittedly,

[1]The central purpose of the 'Note on Intellectual Life in the U.S.A.' I am unable to fix with any certainty. He speaks first of Simone de Beauvoir's impressions of New York intellectual life after her recent visit, transitionally of the American intellectual as described by Mr. Wolpert in *Partisan Review* No. 5, 1947, finally of *Partisan Review* itself, but here mostly of its audience.

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peculiar and particularly virulent. But surely for *Scrutiny* readers that can have relevance only as it demonstrates how in specific instances that bias distorts, in *Partisan Review* for example, literary-critical judgment. He will find such a case almost impossible to establish.

A more important point: beyond any doubt nothing much can be accomplished by recording impressions of American intellectual life after the perusal of one year's issue of any magazine, even though they are, as in Mr. Mason's longer and more pointed study of *The New Republic* (*Scrutiny*, December, 1938), 'impressions gleaned from fairly constant reading over the last few years' (p. 250). The least that could be done in a responsible way would be to apply Mr. Eliot's criterion that 'the bound volumes of a *decade* (my italics) should represent the development of the keenest sensibility and the clearest thought of the ten years'. (Quoted in 'The Critical Review of To-day', by R. G. Cox, *Scrutiny*, September 1947, p. 265). There yet remains, even in these instances, the comparison with previous and with later decades, especially since there are appreciable changes in each, as in England. If *Scrutiny*'s critical record were examined by American critics, surely its supporters would expect that *all* the issues to date were carefully analysed to establish the relative dependability, let us say, of its critical analyses and judgments.

One might here assert confidently that had Mr. Mason examined all the issues of *Partisan Review* from its inception in 1934 to date, his conclusion would have been similar to the judgment passed in 1938 on *The New Republic*: '*The New Republic* enables its readers to participate in the best opinion of the day and not to be twenty of fifty years behind the times as in England' (p. 254).

But these limitations of Mr. Mason's article are at once apparent and easily remediable. There remains still an implicit defect which, perhaps through mistaken hyper-sensitivity, American eyes detect: a curious absence of the habit of extensive and thoroughgoing *comparison* with the English scene point for point, especially in an article which notes 'similarity in plight' and desiderates an effort towards unity. One feels a certain serious doubt about the possibility for common understanding between English and American intellectuals until one can discern among English critics, writers for *Scrutiny* included, at least a modicum of the peculiar American self-consciousness, 'the work of self-understanding that America seems (unlike England) to undertake with a certain verve', as Mr. Mason himself once put it in the article already alluded to. That self-consciousness is often naïve, often touched with professional or academic jargon, often uselessly verbalized, often springing from profound insecurities, but basically honest and searching, and at its best invaluable. The Americans at least begin with what they discern to be the facts about themselves and their institutions. Writers for *Scrutiny* may point, indeed, to its constant attempt to fix social and cultural disintegration in England, and one can only applaud the consistency and focussed intelligence of that effort. But so much

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more might be done, at least in this writer's opinion, if they adopted at the outset an attitude of *parity*, recognized the similarity of the disease, and traced the degree of relative infection in both countries. Too often America becomes, as in Mr. Mason's article, the unproved symbol of all that is reprehensible in contemporary life, while England takes comfort where, to a disinterested observer, there is no cause for comfort. It is an attitude bordering on complacency, surely strange in the pages of *Scrutiny*.

To turn for a moment to Mr. Mason's own article. What of English 'bohemianism' as it affects creative writing and criticism? He instances James T. Farrell's article on the 'Fate of Writing in America'. What of the publishing situation in England, which *Scrutiny* has indeed touched on, but only in the earlier issues, the latest a reference to the *Times Literary Supplement* survey made before the war, entitled 'Our Present Discontents'? Mr. Mason records also that the 'chief complaint was of the hard lot of the American intellectual. Their review had a circulation of ten thousand, but what was that in comparison with the millions of the total population? Their feeling of isolation as a group was intensified by the lack of friendship among fellow-writers'. What of the isolation of *Scrutiny* and other periodicals and the precariousness of 'friendships' with opinion so divided? Again, what of the very few 'good writers and good films' in England? Were there not similarly in both countries and at approximately the same time, *i.e.*, the 'twenties, considerably more good writers and good critics? Can American writers now learn anything from British writers? American scholars from British scholars? And are there not considerably more good critics writing in America than in England? Indeed, why has there not been in *Scrutiny* a study of one or several years' issue of comparable English literary journals, and comparisons made? Mr. Mason admits that the English are 'singularly ill-informed about what corresponds in New York, say, to the literary world . . . of London or Paris'. But even before the war it was impossible to obtain in the University of Cambridge library or at the Bodleian (and, one must suppose, in any library in England with the exception of the British Museum) regular copies of our good American literary journals—*Partisan*, *Kenyon*, *Southern* (now defunct), *Sewanee* reviews—let alone many of our lively 'little magazines'. Why are not American journals now given a wider circulation, especially among teachers in English secondary schools as well as among teachers and students of English literature in the universities and training colleges? Why must *Partisan Review*, for example, depend on the kind of management that does little to make it better known and drops it so quickly?

America has become the symbol for mass-production and standardization, high-pressure advertising, inorganic community living, commercialized culture and the rest. But where is an English *Middletown*? One hears about race and religious prejudice in America, but where are similar objective studies in England? Mr. Wolpert's article on the American intellectual can be parallelled in

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America with additional documentation. But where is a study of the English intellectual? *Scrutiny* has, indeed, from its very inception been *aware of* the basic problems, but who has given us the material we need? On the other hand, Englishmen can work with prodigious documentation concerning any aspect of American life.

Granted, then, the active desire of a magazine like *Scrutiny* to collaborate with whatever American reviews or whatever American writers share a similar concern for the collaborative effort towards standards and who are similarly aware of the cultural plight, much can, perhaps, be done. What follows then is one individual's attempted formulation of the dilemma of the American intellectual, envisioning collaboration. What can *Scrutiny* contribute? What can *Scrutiny* learn? What might be common ground?

The American intellectual—specifically the audience of the literary reviews—comes, normally, from that part of the writing-publishing-academic group (only marginally from the professional, business or working classes) for whom the central preoccupation is that of understanding himself disinterestedly in relation to a complex environment.[2] In America, as in England, this disinterested, serious, sober attempt to see one's contemporary experience honestly, to proceed with no illusions, few compromises, to be undeceived—this attitude, this inquiry doesn't pay (or, as we say in America, doesn't 'pay off'). No serious writer or critic makes enough money from his writing to support himself, let alone to support himself and his family. Most of them must supplement the small sum with other work, commonly with teaching at a university, or some form of journalism. Some of them, like Allen Tate, work for publishers. William Carlos Williams is a doctor, Wallace Stevens

[2]I am not here concerned with 'fringe' groups, mentioned by Mr. Wolpert and commented on by Mr. Mason. I take it that there is in both countries a notable absence of standards, the one effective means of checking bohemian eccentricities. But that the bohemians constitute for a magazine like *Partisan Review* the special *ambiance* against which they must exert themselves to produce creative and critical work of merit is clearly a distortion. Actually, political differences constitute a much more serious dividing point, the magazine ceasing publication at one time (1936-7) for over a year as a result of such division. To use a bookseller's advertisement as evidence is dangerous. I happen to know the bookseller whose advertisements in *Partisan Review* Mr. Mason refers to as reflecting a large part of the magazine's audience. He is only an instance of the shrewd business-man, with surely a counterpart in England, who perceives that a comfortable living may be made by sounding 'chic' taste, contemporary smart talk—and capitalizing on it. His bookshop is the *salon* thoroughly commercialized: one may meet the *avant-garde* at a cocktail party. Incidentally, his is one of the few bookshops in New York City where a copy of *Scrutiny* may be obtained!

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is in the insurance business. But they are exceptions to the general rule of the academic world. One records the fact with a feeling almost of approbation, things being as they are, society voluntarily reducing their role to that of 'marginal' men, to use Mr. Wolpert's phrase. At least in the universities, staffed in increasing numbers by writers and critics, it will be possible to train a greater audience for the serious writing—*Scrutiny's* aim.

The unprofitableness itself they do not find too discouraging: historically they doubt whether it has ever been much different. What they do find discouraging bears comparison with the situation in England. Once again, what is needed are responsible studies fixing differences in degree.

In the first place, what is most wearing, most depressing and enervating is the money environment in which the American intellectual must move, which weighs him down and which is inescapable, even geographically. It is essentially and pervasively a business ethos: everybody is engaged in making money—one's friends, one's family, one's professional associates. Our values are money values in a most compelling sense. We are advertised into them almost every minute of our waking lives. To eat well, to live comfortably, to educate one's children suitably, to possess the best household appliances are now necessities, just as books, music and painting reproductions are necessities, for intellectuals as for others. For the writer (sometimes for the critic) the corruptions lie all about him: the Luce publications, highly-paid advertising copy, radio script-writing, slick magazines, best-seller possibilities, Hollywood and all the rest. These pressures, added to those to be described, are usually enough to make the minor talent capitulate, often the major.

In such a society the intellectual, whatever his peculiar manner of money-making, is held rather in quiet contempt by the great majority, often by his very family and friends. Almost any worker in a decent union makes more money than he does; almost every worker, in addition, feels at least a certain sense of solidarity as a member of a strong group. The possibilities for money-making are so various, the range of incomes so considerable, the activity itself so dominant, that the strain of resistance is surely almost qualitatively different from the situation in England. Nor does the American intellectual possess any illusions about the extent of his influence in American life. If he did, the recent war must certainly have supplied the corrective. In the universities, he observes that everything in the student's life is in sharp contradiction to whatever intelligent attitudes of responsibility and social conscience one might hope to train. Culturally, he cannot hope to compete with widespread commercialization, although in recent years the serious reading public has grown somewhat. Even here, one could not at present hope that such a public could accurately appreciate and assess the poetry and novels recommended by our better literary journals. Educationally, he is still negligible in a system run largely by academic specialists of all complexions, although here, too, recent

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years have brought a somewhat favourable swing in the universities in the direction of the kind of criticism that intellectuals can provide. At least one can say unhesitatingly that literary study at the good American universities is considerably more lively than in English universities, academically as respectable and critically in advance.

The commercialization of culture in America has already been referred to, the opinion expressed that the difference in degree constitutes almost a qualitative distinction. There is another difference. In America, analysis and understanding of the situation has so far outreached positive steps which have been taken. In the secondary schools almost nothing at all has been done, largely because, committed to democratic large numbers, teachers of English have neither the time nor the materials to work with. Here *Scrutiny* is able to make a real contribution, by way of indicating how much has been done in English secondary schools in the direction of training in discrimination. By this time Downing-trained men, and other teachers working along similar lines, have gone into the secondary schools in numbers and have made their influence felt. In American universities, on the other hand, the possibilities are considerable, once the hold of the specialist-academics has been sufficiently released. The American university student of English is the equivalent of the English Sixth Form student, having the added advantage of continuing his education through the graduate school, if he so wishes. Here too *Scrutiny* has much to offer, first, in its positive training for students undertaking literary study, second, in its incisive criticism of academic-specialist production in itself and as it affects teaching, finally, in its integrating view of the function of a university, surpassing, in one individual's opinion at least, the multiple experiments in 'general education' instituted at so many American universities.

Again, what characterizes the American intellectual distinctively is his *search for community*. He is separated from the main body of the American community whose ideas, beliefs, attitudes, tastes and way of life generally he cannot share. And the social, educational and cultural groups of which he approves, he approves only in strongly qualified fashion. The result is fragmentation which makes as much a demand upon his intelligence for careful discrimination and selection as does the near-anarchy in the literary-critical world.

Historically, most of the present writers and critics are sons and grandsons of immigrants whose sense of continuity with the homeland has rarely extended beyond one generation, usually not as long. The rich competitive possibilities in a society with considerable social mobility usually swept up his father and grandfather and wiped out private and historic memories. The American language, the American free-school system and the American economic way of life served to erase in a matter of years any trace of real identification with a richer culture than America could boast. The New England tradition, while real in its legacy of puritan and democratic habits of thought, and in its very rough approximation

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in the early days of the English stability from which it derived, touches few intellectuals deeply. For even in the earliest days New England's social stability and its generally shared ethos was only precariously maintained in the face of continual economic expansion. The New England transcendentalists, the first intellectual community of any proportions, turned to Europe. Only the South, based on slave labour, produced in America a society which achieved a partial stability in the inheritance of common political, religious and economic ideas and a somewhat stratified economic structure, persisting to the Civil War. Hence, among American writers only Southern writers and critics gather some strength and stability from a sense of inherited community, although most are disposed to nostalgia and sentimentality in its re-creation.

The typical American intellectual, then, has almost no deep historic memory. He has grown up in a country which has seen almost nothing but capitalist expansion and exploitation, the social dislocations attendant upon them, and the consistent effort of liberal minds to check the more serious abuses. The social complexity and dynamic social change which confront him in his contemporary life seem to him characteristic: mobility has been the rule. Having no knowledge of a community life to which he would voluntarily *belong*, he has turned on the one hand to cultural anthropology, to 'objective' study and on the other to Marxist interpretation. He conceives of American history largely in terms of class struggle, and his visions of reform lack a positive ideal of community which should shape his political and social belief and action. Writers for *Partisan Review* like Burnham and Hook have never created imaginatively the kind of community with richness and warmth to which one might wish to belong. Disaffected communists, like Dos Passos, turning to American history, create an utterly thin and flat world, *i.e.*, *The Ground We Stand On*. The American intellectual sees the history of intellectuals of the past in terms of his own unhappy history. The great writers of the past who win his respect are almost invariably the rebels against the existing order or those who turned to other countries and other ways of life for the kind of satisfaction which their own country could not bring, and in so doing imitated 'brother-rebels' in England: Thoreau, Melville, Hawthorne, James.

Whether writers for *Scrutiny* have any contribution to make here remains to be proved. At least one would like to see them offer for the consideration of American writers and critics in some detail its own reading of the organic community of England's past: where there was a shared ethos; where community ties were close, functional, and involved mutual responsibilities; where the intellectual at one time had a function important and respected, and was the representative and guardian of common belief and attitude, not a rebel. *Scrutiny* writers can offer, too, their description of the process of disintegration and decay, beginning in exaggerated form with the industrial revolution as it expanded in the nineteenth century. Such a view, fully documented, might influence many

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American intellectuals to re-read their own history with a different intent, with an added dimension, and might offer new possibilities to be explored.

The material pressures, the debased cultural life, the social fragmentation and absence of real community by no means exhaust the description of his plight. The American intellectual, we have seen, cannot bring himself to plunge into competitive business life. There are thus few courses left open for him. He can, on the one hand, identify himself with some political group working towards a form of democratic socialism, or, as the increasing numbers show, towards some form of modified capitalism. His failure here so far to understand both the nature of the capitalist and the worker represents his most humiliating defeat, since the lack of historical depth behind that interpretation has exploded in his face. So far he has been reduced to squabbling in fringe groups.

In the second place, however, he can accept his role as *critic* of all political and religious platforms, all social programmes, all cultural agencies. His function is thus to give to society his honest experience, his disinterested and responsible reporting of contemporary life, the vigour of his intellectual equipment, the fineness of his perceptions. In this role he should be able to direct attention *economically* to those writers and critics who have most effectively defined contemporary sensibility or who have most intelligently re-interpreted inherited traditions here and now. In other words, each in his way might perform the function of a kind of minor Arnold. Here he may join with the writers of *Scrutiny*.

Thus, as a critic he must work *towards standards*. But the effort towards standards is particularly difficult in America. America has produced no unified or large critical tradition from which he can learn. Again, there are so many forces that he must constantly resist, that the resistance itself leaves him frustrated and worn. The pressures already alluded to, in addition to the fierce divisions and competitions within his own professional group, render personal relationships uncertain and tenuous. Any effort towards standards, too, argues personal growth, equal to the involvement with, and the assimilation and possession of, writers of stature. But in America, as elsewhere, personal growth is difficult to imagine apart from a command of direct human relationships and a full participation in fairly wide and representative community life. One expects that the intelligent person will have understood and clearly placed, with some depth and detail, the most important social groups, and will have understood *qualitatively* their mode of life, as well as the interconnections. The American intellectual has not yet proved equal to such understanding. Standards require, too, some clearly conceived ends towards which education, social and political action might be oriented. Intellectuals should be capable of singling out clearly and unequivocally, at least, those contemporary social groups, cultural agencies, and political forces which need strongly to be resisted, and they must be prepared to give the terms of that resistance. It is impossible to find among American

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intellectuals any cultural programme, for example, with clearly defined ends in view.

But he inherits a still harder task. Not only is he expected to know well his own history and the best writers in his own tradition, itself a formidable task. He knows that his European inheritance is as important as his American, and realizes that he must know something of the history, and many of the best writers—including philosophers, political thinkers and historians, as well as poets, novelists, playwrights and critics—of many countries. With such an impossible mass of material to digest, and, more important still, living in a community which has never faced squarely the dilemma, the intellectual rarely *earns* what he learns. Intellectual and moral assimilation which has not grown evenly and honestly with personal growth has in America resulted in a very familiar half-digested verbalism which may confuse and irritate the Englishman. *Partisan Review*, for example, contains the most brilliant kind of verbalization, of abstract placing, of quick, digestive phrasing hiding a paucity of personal resources and revealing in fact incredible immaturity. There is in America sometimes a fantastic gulf between the one-dimensional quality of personal relationships—the background, for example, against which Dos Passos's dramas are enacted, the life which Dreiser and Farrell capture—in normal American life, and the highly abstract systems which interpret them. Young men and women who develop in American universities, who often write such significant and moving documents of early life, are almost invariably killed by the milieu of semantics, the history of ideas, Marxism, cultural history, psycho-analysis and sociology into which they come to move. To describe a human experience in dimensional human terms, as a Lawrence might, is no longer possible in an intellectual society which frowns upon such mistaken 'simplicity' as strictly as the Victorians did upon moral aberration. In the New York City society, represented let us say by the *Partisan Review*, one has difficulty facing one's friends unless one can perform skilfully with one's childhood or married life, using a highly elaborate, often a coterie, set of abstractions. The writer must show familiarity with the latest psycho-analytic, sociological or anthropological theories.

The American intellectual, thus, faced with the commercial product or the obviously immature (Saroyan, Tennessee Williams, Henry Miller, Odets, Patchen, Marquand, MacLeish, Millay, etc.) is much livelier and much more devastating than the Englishman. The record of *Partisan Review* in this respect refutes Mr. Mason's earlier point about 'bohemianism' of audience. But given a number of works which are obviously serious, obviously of some maturity, he finds it impossible to give relative valuations. He has yet to write his own American literature in qualitative terms, fixing roughly the places of Melville, Poe, Hawthorne, Emerson, Thoreau, Twain, Whitman, Dickinson, Dos Passos, Faulkner, Stevens and the rest against the background of European literature. And he has yet to distinguish between the major and minor works of these

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writers themselves. Contemporaries like Bellow, Rosenfeld, Lowell, Warren, Stafford, McCullers and Schwartz, for example, are not evaluated sharply against writers in the 'twenties. Writers for *Scrutiny*, too, would note in American magazines the uncertainty of evaluative judgment in the cases of Auden, Spender, Thomas, Day Lewis, MacNeice, V. S. Pritchett, Elizabeth Bowen, Graham Greene, Edith Sitwell and others. And in the latter cases, American studies consistently overlook the relation of the writer to his particular society.

In American criticism, one can find technical, intellectual and social *exegesis* that seems at its best undeniably in advance of what one can discover similarly elsewhere. As a matter of fact, the reading of American literature has been almost entirely to this point a matter of cultural history, *i.e.*, the writer has been considered relatively important in so far as his work may be used as cultural or social documentation. And it is particularly here that writers for *Scrutiny*, who move with such assurance, comparatively, among qualitative valuations, have a clear contribution to make. The effort of all criticism in *Scrutiny* has been consistently towards collaborative standards for distinguishing the genuine from the meretricious and for evaluating with delicacy and sureness among the genuine. Its writers have by this time not only agreed in a general way about the most important contemporary and traditional writers. They have, more than that, established the critical terms and the critical climate in which fruitful discussion can take place. It is as a result principally of such criticism that its critical record bears comparison with the best literary journals in the last forty to fifty years.

At the same time the English intellectual should be prepared to recognize the considerable merits of writing, criticism and scholarship in America. He should note that conditions there exist, through the free play of intelligence, for the emergence of the toughest minds which gain their positions by proving themselves against all-comers. Contrast the situation in England as described by Cyril Connolly himself in *Enemies of Promise*. There is, in effect, a democracy of intelligence especially in the universities, and once the balance between responsible criticism and scholarship has been somewhat restored, one can hope for much. At present there is a wealth of good writing and criticism (to mention only a few: Blackmur, Tate, Ransom, Trilling, Winters, Schorer, Berryman, Levin, Matthiessen, Brooks, Schwartz, Farrell, Heilman, McCullers, Stafford, Lowell, McCarthy, Edmund Wilson, Bishop, Hardwick, Bentley, Austin Warren, Robert Penn Warren, Burke, most of whom are teaching in the universities) and many meritable magazines in addition to those already mentioned (*Hudson Review*, *Western Review*, *Commentary*, *Nation* (The *New Republic* has long ceased to matter), *Accent*, *Briarcliffe Quarterly*, *Furioso*, *Virginia Quarterly* and others). Thus the grounds for the possible emergence of the distinguished synthesizing mind are prepared. In a review entitled 'The Background of Twentieth Century Letters', Q. D. Leavis noted (*Scrutiny*, June 1939): 'No one could deny that the American

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[literary] history represents a healthy development, an evolution out of the chaos and futility to a general recognition of standards and an agreement to abiding values, in literary criticism' (p. 78).

One might hope, then, for a greater degree of collaboration in the future between *Scrutiny* and certain American periodicals. *Scrutiny*, as has been suggested, has much to offer: first, the *economy of direction* it offers by insisting that students begin with only those critics whose criticism makes a difference in their equipment. It thus encourages first-hand independent judgment and the common pooling of resources in the effort towards standards. In the second place, it offers one formulation of the dilemma facing the contemporary intellectual and steps towards a solution. With the increased recognition that *Scrutiny* has received in America, one might hope for livelier exchanges in the future.

Scrutiny has in the past used American critics and scholars as sticks with which to beat their counterparts in England. Why, then, has it not shown a more ambitious attempt to make the work of Americans better known among the English, and why has it not made more use of as much of their work as befits its purpose? While one must in the end use only the very highest standards in judging the work of any writer or critic, surely much work might be done in common in preparing the ground for agreement and disagreement.

Of course, one must face the melancholy possibility that, so intent are both writers for *Scrutiny* and the better American critics in resisting their social, intellectual, cultural and professional environment, so oriented are their habits of critical discrimination towards rejection—money and social values, advertising, film, theatre, radio, music, fine-arts, best-sellers, political alternatives, joyless communities, specializations, administrating politicians and academic-specialists in the profession—that they do not possess, quite simply, the habits of co-operation.

SEYMOUR BETSKY.

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AUTHORITY AND METHOD IN EDUCATION

SOME REFLECTIONS ON MR. FORD'S REJOINDER

I HAD anticipated with some eagerness Mr. Boris Ford's reply to my article on *The Cultural Implications of Freedom in Education*; for my intention there, as Mr. Ford correctly surmises, was largely to provoke stock-taking (though I did not object to agreement with my thesis), in what I judged to be a dangerously evolving educational situation. My article indeed had a specific and immediate educational purpose. It was consciously written as a complement to my previous *Scrutiny* article, as is revealed in a footnote; and its terminology, as I shall make clear, belongs to that end. But it was also intended to assist staff discussion at the training college at which I teach. There, many members of the staff, who like myself are engaged in the daily commerce of the lecture room and in the necessity of advising and instructing students in concrete educational situations had felt the need for clarification of existing issues. My article was intended as a contribution to that discussion. I had not thought it necessary to report such local significance: but in view of Mr. Ford's appeal to personal experience I feel that this relation to concrete issues should be mentioned.

I welcomed then Mr. Ford's reply as a further contribution, at *Scrutiny* level, to a very immediate and specific controversy. I wrote what I wrote because as a result of school visits, the supervision of students on school practice, talks with head and assistant teachers, discussions with inspectors, colleagues and students and over ten years' teaching experience in schools on my own account I felt dissatisfied, and indeed alarmed, with much of the shape—partly the official shape—of modern educational policy. My disappointment at what seems to me the inadequacy of Mr. Ford's reply has, perhaps because of my anticipation, been all the greater. I find his article contradictory, muddled, and in certain of its implications, positively dangerous; and I propose to examine what he has to say and to show the reasons for my reaction.

Mr. Ford begins by a brief summary of my argument. He then commences his criticism by boggling at my phraseology: 'much of the phraseology and many of the references appear with the appropriate watermark', appropriate, that is to say to the reactions of the *Scrutiny* reader. Now, as I have already made it clear above, my article was written specifically for *Scrutiny*; I am myself a reader of *Scrutiny* and have been since its inception. To use the *Scrutiny* key-words was therefore a quite conscious, shorthand method,

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placing what I had to say within the *Scrutiny* tradition and indicating my general approval of those positive 'standards' that have emerged from the *Scrutiny* undertaking during its sixteen years of existence. This seems to me a perfectly legitimate procedure, especially in a journal which has as clearly defined a policy as *Scrutiny*, and especially in an article which is concerned, as its title should have made clear, with a criticism of existing undertakings. What in effect I was concerned to say was: If you believe, as on the whole I do, in those cultural values for which *Scrutiny* stands, you must realize that this educational theory I am examining is likely to have certain unfortunate consequences which emerge from a consideration of the inadequacy of its prescriptions and of the uncritical acceptance of its key-concepts.

Mr. Ford then proceeds to charge me with a 'disquieting readiness to talk educational theory, a species of talk which is far too loosely related to educational practice'. Now I have, I hope, made it plain that my educational 'talk' was closely related to, grew out of, concrete educational experience, was in fact designed to meet the exigencies of particular situations. But in any case I do not see why a readiness to talk educational theory should necessarily be described as 'disquieting'. I would agree with Mr. Ford that there is a tremendous, an alarming, amount of quite inadequate writing about education, much of it naïvely anecdotal in the manner which Mr. Ford seems to favour. (I say 'naïvely anecdotal' because, as seems to be true, as I shall show, of some of Mr. Ford's accounts, the narrators never seem to pause to ask themselves what the implications are of the procedures they describe). And for that reason, at a period when the whole of our educational system is undergoing great, even revolutionary changes, I would suggest that the need to examine fundamental principles, to ask what the further consequences are of courses of action that for immediate ends seem so eminently desirable, was never more pressing. 'Doing' rather than 'Knowing' has, as Matthew Arnold diagnosed, long been a characteristic philistine preoccupation. To those of us who are engaged in the quotidinal business of the classroom, the desire to pause occasionally to examine the fundamentals of our practice is, I think, no bad thing. And my respect for Mr. Ford's disquiet is not increased by the reported brevity of his practice and his own readiness to theorize from it.

But it is in the next paragraph that what I take to be the gravamen of Mr. Ford's charges occurs. His accusations concerning the inadequacy of my '*prescriptions*' he answers for me; for indeed, as he surmises, I 'was not concerned in this essay to provide the alternatives'. But then Mr. Ford proceeds: 'The difficulty is that the terms in which he states his attack repeatedly invite an inquiry as to what he proposes instead, not so much because one wants to know in detail as because his manner seems to imply, to hint at, attitudes which would not be at all acceptable'. I am not quite sure to what extent these hints and implications are products of Mr. Ford's imagination; for beyond quoting a single remark he gives

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no further indication of just how and where my manner has provoked him to these feelings. But I am entitled to ask 'Not acceptable to whom?' for this Mr. Ford does nothing to clarify. Not acceptable I presume to those whose views I am attacking—which is hardly remarkable. Not acceptable, I suppose, to Mr. Ford; for he proceeds to disinter a single sentence from an argument in which it is embedded and from which it takes its significance, and on the basis of this finds me guilty of 'inadequate social analysis, bad logic and an elementary confusion over relation between educational purposes and methods'. It is worth quoting the whole passage that is relevant, italicizing the sentence which so offends Mr. Ford:

> 'One of the more deplorable effects of this type of theory (the theory, that is to say, under review) lies, of course, in the increasing abdication of the function of the teacher. His or her job is becoming more and more that of merely providing an adequate environment so that the children shall be able "to follow up lines of interest and exercise every muscle in their bodies and every faculty of their minds", as Miss M. V. Daniel exuberantly proclaims. It seems to me to afford merely another aspect of the general abandonment of intellectual and moral leadership in our society. *The whole unwillingness to impose a view of life merely means that a worse view will be adopted, for a child cannot live in a vacuum.* One would have thought that the need for demanding standards—or at least creating a framework, which, while permitting a certain flexibility would rigidly exclude deleterious interests and pursuits—was never more necessary to-day when the teacher is—or should be—one of the few civilizing influences in our vulgarized social order'.

I would have thought that what I meant was sufficiently clear from this. I want the teacher to bear in mind the relative capacities of his or her charges. But I also want the teacher, once those capacities have been assessed, to direct the child towards ends which the teacher, from the stand-point of superior wisdom and training, knows to be ultimately beneficial to the child. In other words, I want the teachers' conception of what is beneficial rather than the child's own necessarily limited (limited because of age and lack of experience) views on its own benefit to prevail. I had already been at pains to make quite clear that what I looked for was 'not the *rigid* imposition of a set standard' (footnote 7). I have proclaimed my distaste for the more violent forms of imposition. I would have thought that my reference to George Eliot's Tom Tulliver would have shown that I allowed for individual idiosyncrasy. But it is fair to assume that, however inadequate in some ways the members of the teaching profession may be—and we who train them know just how inadequate in certain directions many of them are—the teachers will represent something considerably superior to the other environmental influences which will be brought to bear on the vast majority of our children. They will in fact prove a civilizing influence in the direction of those positive standards which are

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represented at their best in the traditions for which *Scrutiny* may be said to stand. It seems to me to be right, therefore, that where children are concerned the teachers should encourage one type of interest rather than another, should induce one type of conduct rather than another, should bring to bear upon their pupils one type of influence rather than another. One of Mr. Ford's charges against my sentence is that it implies 'that the view of life which would seek to fill the vacuum is *necessarily* worse than the teacher's (undefined) way of life'. Mr. Ford admits that we live in a society whose standards are 'shallow and shifting'. The vast majority of our school population are, in their daily lives, subjected to influences —the popular press, the cheap novel, the cinema, etc.—which I am sure Mr. Ford would join me in regarding as deleterious; some are subjected to influences more vicious still. A few children come from gifted homes; but for the considerable majority the schools and the teachers in the schools provide one of the few organized civilizing influences. And it is for that reason that I wish the teachers to play that *positive* part in the lives of the children which my use of the word 'impose' implies and which the educational theory under review (and its practice, as I know from my personal experience) all too frequently inhibits them from doing.

Yet I suspect that the quarrel between us is ultimately not one over methods but over ends. I do not think that Mr. Ford is primarily concerned with learning and culture; a fact which may account for his difficulty in locating my position. There are indeed one or two preliminary indications that Mr. Ford's main sympathies lie elsewhere; though it is not until we come to analyse the type of education that Mr. Ford seems to find most desirable that the exact nature of those sympathies is revealed. There is, however, as a preliminary, Mr. Ford's little anecdote about Dartington Hall; and I would like to join issue with Mr. Ford over this piece of practical pedagogy, were it not that his expression is so slipshod that I find some difficulty in discovering what precisely happened. Mr. Ford was told by Mr. Raymond O'Malley of a fond parent of literary attainments who sent his son to Dartington Hall to be cured of a taste for detective novels and to be turned into a literary genius. 'Forced to choose between the two (the detective novels and, I presume, works of greater literary repute), Raymond O'Malley *came down on the side of the detective novels*', and the father, dissatisfied, removed his son and sent him to Eton.

Now my uncertainty arises from the precise significance to be attached to the clause I have italicized. What does 'came down on the side of' imply? Are we to understand that Mr. O'Malley provided a fare made up entirely of detective novels for his young charge? that he forebore the attempt to wean him by exhortation, by careful and patient analysis of the inadequacies of his present reading matter, by placing within his grasp superior material, by imposing upon him, if only for a limited period, the necessity of tackling more astringent mental food, so that at least the boy would have the opportunity of making comparisons and of settling within

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his own mind whether detective novels were indeed the best or even the most interesting works available. None of this does Mr. Ford make clear. He introduces the anecdote in hearty refutation of my heavy-handed pedagogy—and perhaps, of my cultural self-righteousness, a phrase which in itself does something to fix Mr. Ford's position. Those who appeal to experience should more carefully consider its implications, or at least take a little more care in its exposition. The stupidity of the father's pretensions should not blind us to what, as reported by Mr. Ford, would appear to be the inadequacies of Mr. O'Malley's educational practice.[1] And how does Mr. Ford square his approval of Mr. O'Malley with his own practice? For a little later Mr. Ford, who accepts my view that 'some ideas are more valuable than others' as 'the basis of any genuine educational undertaking' admits that 'the ability to apprehend value' only comes 'slowly by trial and error. This means that one has to place one's pupil face-to-face with the particular problem in such a way that he has himself to pass judgment and then appreciate the consequences of making a mistake'. The coercive implications of 'has to' should not be lost. But how the student appreciates the 'consequences of making a mistake' or is even aware that he has made one, unless Mr. Ford is willing at least to indicate an opposing view and to assert, however urbanely, his own superior judgment in the affair I do not know.

This seems to be an appropriate moment for a comment on the question of authority in cultural matters; for it is such a question that Mr. Ford by implication raises by his objection to the idea of an 'imposition'. Although Mr. Ford, as we shall see, has no objection to the use of authority for the attainment of certain ends that he regards as desirable, he is obviously extremely shy about its use where artistic and cultural matters are concerned. And indeed, in such reluctance, he is at one with the age. The liberal democratic tradition, nineteenth-century rationalism, with its belief in the all-embracing possibilities of rational persuasion, Freudian psychology, and the romantic tradition of finding the source of enlightenment within the self, have all contributed in their various ways, to the decay of the idea of authority in human affairs. Thus authority in general is suspect—and nowhere more than in matters of taste, where the consequences of making a mistake are so intangible as to escape notice. It might even be more relevant to investigate the consequences of not making a mistake. For to be 'right' in such matters all too frequently involves the individual in conflict with his environment; it lays him open to charges of 'superiority', 'snobbery'—perhaps of 'cultural self-righteousness'. In some circles, cultural solecism is the passport to social approval.

So in what sort of way is the pupil to appreciate even the possibility of making a mistake unless he makes a prior submission,

[1]My apologies are, of course, due to Mr. O'Malley for thus making use of his name. He will understand, I am sure, that the need was necessitated by the terms of Mr. Ford's anecdote.

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partly to the matter of his study and partly to the superior wisdom and taste of his mentor who derives his 'authority' from the discipline in which he is instructing. Mr. Ford is pleased to pervert the meaning of my remark about 'I like it' being the 'first and last words in literary criticism'; for he cannot be unaware of the significance 'only' that is normally attached to the phrase 'first and last'. But he proceeds:

> 'While I believe profoundly that taste is not relative, I am inclined to think that the *first* and *last* words in artistic criticism must necessarily be "I like it" or "I don't like it". Unless one is capable of an initial response to the work of art (later one may reject it), no amount of analysis or demonstration, let alone imposing of a point of view, can strike home'.

I don't quite know what depth of initial response Mr. Ford requires beyond, say, 'What muck!' or 'Isn't it lovely?' But the ability to respond more deeply can only go along with a submission to the superior capacity of the teacher to demonstrate subtleties beyond the untrained receptivities of the pupil to understand. In other words, the fact of authority, however subtly disguised, enters into the pursuit of all knowledge. Learning always involves a determination to grasp after what is as yet uncomprehended. It requires, on the part of the learner, a respect for the unknown, a reverence before the unattained. All learning presupposes an act of faith, a faith that there is, in fact, something to be learnt. There is a possible sense in which values may have to be recreated each time; but any such recreation is paradoxically dependent upon a previous acknowledgment of their existence.

So, unless the respect for authority, the authority of the subject, the authority of the teacher (which derives from the subject), exists, learning becomes impossible. Thus I cannot accept bald statements of 'I like it' or 'I don't like it' as the *first* and *last* words (within Mr. Ford's meaning of the phrase) in artistic criticism, especially where those who are clearly in the position of learners are concerned. For the best first word might well be a humble quiescence before the fact; and the best last word might well involve an admission to a lack of comprehension. Mr. Ford, if I understand him correctly, involves himself in a curious contradiction. At one moment he states quite firmly that he does not believe that value is relative; the next, he accepts the idea that value needs to be recreated in each individual, with the implication that where value is concerned, the individual is autonomous. The modern idea that the acceptance of or respect for value goes no further than the individual's capacity for rational comprehension would only be possible in an era which makes man the measure of all things and his personal standard the only criterion. One at least of the advantages of living in a religious age was that the ultimate standard became what was by definition the Incomprehensible. What for instance is one to make of the remark that 'however convincing the demonstration may be, at the end it

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requires the counter-signature of the individual's affirmation or rejection'. The demonstration exists, by definition, as a convincing proof and the individual pupil's acceptance or rejection makes no scrap of difference, except from the purely personal point of view of the pupil, which is something irrelevant to the convincingness of the demonstration. The fact that to some people the results of artistic creation will forever remain a mystery does not in any way destroy the validity of that creation.

And so, in the pupil, the act of acceptance of the authority of the as yet unknown is an essential pre-requisite to learning; and where Mr. Ford's adults are concerned, we may well imagine that there is a willing submission based on adult responsibility. But where children are involved, no such prior acceptance can be assumed. For the conscious willingness to accept the authority of that which is not comprehended can only be based on that which is comprehended; that of which I have not prior experience whatsoever does not exist for me even in a state of uncomprehension. Thus my willingness to look further at pictures, to seek a deeper understanding of the processes of art can only be based on a prior experience (however slight) of looking at pictures; in this sense, Mr. Ford, in demanding some sort of initial response, is right. But experience of such matters does not come by the light of nature. Hence the need, where children are concerned, of a much fuller exercise of authority to a degree to which the use of the word 'impose' would be a perfectly legitimate employment. For by the light of nature a child knows neither what he wants to do nor—as important—does he know what he doesn't want to do. Mr. Ford takes me to task for suggesting that the need to practise the piano may have to be imposed on the young. Now the playing of a musical instrument is a highly artificial occupation. Its delights only become apparent after a long and arduous apprenticeship. Such delights cannot possibly be apparent to a child, who sees before him only a series of exercises which it would be unfair to assume would 'interest' any child. Hence the need to impose the experience of practising the piano for at least a reasonable time so that the child shall be afforded an opportunity of deciding whether it wishes to pursue the study. As D. H. Lawrence says, we constantly need to make decisions for our children.[2] It may interest Mr. Ford to know that my example was drawn from my own experience. I was not 'made' to learn the piano as a child; and now, when I have not the time to learn, I regret it bitterly.[3] Mr.

[2]'We, the educators, have got to decide for the children: decide the steps of their young fates, seriously and reverently'. (*Education of the People*).

[3]Mr. Ford may be interested in another experience where the imposition of a set task was involved. I once had to study *Silas Marner* with a particularly backward school certificate form. It was not a book I would have chosen for these particular boys, but the alternatives were even less suitable. We studied the book with

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Ford indeed provides his own panacea for drudgery, and a remarkable one it is. But of this I must postpone a consideration until later.

For the moment I am concerned to reveal Mr. Ford's own views on authority. For that he accepts an authority aiming at a specific end becomes quite clear by the time one has read his article. A preliminary hint as to the nature and sanctions of this authority is contained in what Mr. Ford regards as the proper basis for a view of life. This appears to be the degree of 'social backing'—not indeed a contemporary, but an idealized, social backing—it obtains. Because teachers' views lack such a social sanction, and because the 'nature of contemporary society is to . . . discourage the emergence of coherent communal groupings', the teachers are 'bound either to have a sense of limited and uncertain authority, or else to resort to bumptious self-importance'. I cannot see that these are necessarily the alternatives; but at least we are provided with a possible source of authority that would find favour with Mr. Ford.

When we examine the nature of the education that Mr. Ford would seem to recommend at the Jewish school attached to the Settlement at Mishmar Haemek, the suspicion becomes a certainty.[4] Mr. Ford, as the result of a 'brief and inadequate' visit to this school, provides us with a description of its workings as an example of the possibility of purposefulness within a framework of freedom. That I would not accept any and every manifestation of purposefulness should, I think, have been obvious to Mr. Ford if he had read my essay on Planning and Popularization, with which my later essay was explicitly linked. The nature of that purposefulness is a vital consideration. The worth of freedom takes its significance from the quality of the framework of order within which it exists. Mr. Ford's description of Mishmar Haemek provides a prime example of just how too great a self-congratulation over method can blind one to the extraordinarily restricted nature of what one is attempting; though indeed, Mr. Ford, in his description of

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the closeness that the school certificate examination demands; and when I thought they must be heartily tired of it, I asked them if they would like to turn to some other work as a respite. No, one boy said, he would like to continue with *Silas Marner*. He hadn't liked it at first; but the necessity of close study had shown him things in the book which he would never have appreciated otherwise and which had made him change his mind. And the rest of the class concurred. Nor is this an isolated example.

[4]The pattern that is being evolved at Mishmar Haemek is not one confined to a specific situation peculiar to Palestine. It is one that many educationalists would like to see produced, allowing for a certain difference in ideological background, in this country; at least such an attempt is inherent in many of the theories they put forward. My criticisms of Mishmar Haemek have, therefore, a wider reference than to a single Jewish school.

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method, involves himself, because of the singular confinement of his aim, in the most extraordinary verbal contortions, the effect of which is the opposite of impressive.

Mr. Ford begins with a somewhat strained description of his arrival. I use the word 'strained' because he endeavours to invest the event with a portentousness which the situation does nothing to bear out. The ability to provide scratch meals and to lay tables neatly is not, I may say, the prerogative of the children of Mishmar Haemek; but the description is intended to induce the correctly receptive frame of mind in the reader. He then reveals the educational purpose of the school. It is an extremely restricted social one: 'The main task of these schools . . . is to produce good settlers. This means more than at first appears. It means both developing the qualities that go to make a successful Settler, and also confirming the children in their wish to go back to Settlement life at all'. 'What makes a Settler, of course, is his socialist (may one say communist?) idealism reinforced by Zionism'.

Now Mr. Ford is correct in surmising that I would not approve of such an aim. I have no desire to sneer at the achievement of Mishmar Haemek. But my reasons for rejecting so limited an educational aim will be clear from this quotation from my article on planning which I must ask to be allowed to make: 'To make only one aspect of the individual—his social—the ultimate criterion of value is not only to make man the end and aim of all things, but is also to rely on a singularly restricted view of that man'. Though I would prefer the values of Mishmar Haemek to a complete aimlessness, to which a complete abdication of the teacher's function would lead, Mr. Ford's account enables me, within the limitations of the adequacy of that account, to make clear just what I find wanting in a school which accept such ends.

It develops what appear on the surface to be quite admirable qualities. 'The children develop little if any desire for *self*-advancement, they think of the *group's* advantages and success and they accept as natural a scheme of mutual assistance'. Now it is true that on any human being the claim of the group has considerable validity. People must live together; and it is right that for the common good certain personal sacrifices must be made. But to crush the independence of the self, to repress or even to fail to encourage that reasonable self-assertion proper to every living creature, to condemn which would be, as Santayana says, 'to condemn life, which could not go on without it', is to impose a form of selfishness which is no less real through being disguised under a plea for social idealism. And this is a procedure inherent in the idea, which Mr. Ford reports, that the group shall only learn at the pace of the slowest member. There is no reason why the learning capacity of the dullest should be adopted as the criterion, and very good reasons against it. For indeed, such a procedure would seem to involve a very shortsighted view of the type of contribution that the brighter child could make to the general group life, a contribution in which the duller could share. Nor does the

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curriculum inspire confidence; and Mr. Ford, who so vehemently takes me to task for daring to suggest such an idea as the imposition of a view of life sanctions an educational programme the rigidity of which I would never contemplate. The aim of the school is to produce settlers; it is socialist (or communist) idealism combined with Zionism that produces good settlers. Hence the projects chosen by the staff and undertaken by the children not unnaturally have 'a distinctly Zionist flavour about them'. The children's learning, he asserts, is prompted and disciplined by their study of concrete situations and problems, with the result that it seldom seems academic; it is 'not an end pursued for its own sake but a means to solid everyday achievement'. Now what, I wonder, provides Mr. Ford's criterion of 'solid everyday achievement'? That, I assume, which is in line with socialist-Zionist teachings. And what constitutes a 'concrete situation and problem'? What would happen to a child who chose to study a concrete problem that led him to possible criticisms of the socialist-Zionist position? The possibility of such a thing happening is, of course, remote; for such undertakings would hardly be in line with the rule of the slowest member; and as all the themes have a distinctly Zionist flavour about them, no child presumably has ever been introduced to the possibility of such an idea. But in any case, immediate situations can never be wholly detached from the ends which they subserve. Thus Mr. Ford's dichotomy between concrete situations and 'ends pursued for their own sake' seems to me to be confused. For the life of a socialist-Zionist, which the concrete situations chosen are intended to encourage, is an end pursued for its own sake; it is not a way of life that is in any way 'natural' to the children, but one that needs to be fostered consciously and with the greatest care. 'At Mishmar Haemek there was a calculated, but not a crude, attempt to foster certain very excellent human qualities and discourage others, and apparently it succeeded'. Indeed, the imposition of a view of life could hardly go further.[5]

[5]A possibility of assessing what Mr. Ford would regard as 'solid everyday achievement' is perhaps provided by an aside on the Settlement cobbler. This man, Mr. Ford asserts with obvious approval of the change—otherwise there would be little point in introducing the remark—once had a university job, I take it as a lecturer. Now I do not know the person concerned, and there may well have been good reasons for the change, of which I know nothing. But certain questions do raise themselves. At least is posed the problem as to whether the achievement of boots and shoes made is the best contribution that a man with the capacity to lecture in a university can make to the good of mankind. Most people would agree that when Tolstoy gave up the pursuit of literature for a restricted social existence, he was not serving mankind in the manner to which he was best fitted. Many indeed can cobble; few can lecture. And Mr. Ford's approval seems to me to provide a further indication of the willingness to accept more immediate

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But Mr. Ford uses his account of Mishmar Haemek to demonstrate to me that freedom and purposefulness can well go together. In his eagerness to prove freedom he sometimes gives vent to some very odd remarks. What is one to make of this, for instance? 'The school and its scheme of life seemed unquestionably to revolve round the children, rather than the children to fit into an already determined structure (this, as I will suggest, was in fact an appearance rather than a reality)'. What is unquestionable in one half of the sentence appears to be very dubious in the other. But Mr. Ford's mental confusions become even more remarkable towards the end of his article. For when he sums up his impressions, he comes to the portentous conclusion that 'What becomes clear, as one thinks over Mr. Bantock's arguments and then looks at the kind of teaching I have tried to describe, is that terms like Freedom and Spontaneity need very careful definition (as indeed he says, in a general kind of way; but to state the need is not the same thing as to provide the definition)'. Now, to point the need of definition was one of the purposes of my article; and I am at pains to indicate some of the confusions to which the word 'spontaneous' is liable. But the need to provide definitions is laid on my opponents, who make such free use of such words. Neither are words of which, in referring to educational activities, I would care to make much use; and 'spontaneous' I would certainly banish from my vocabulary altogether. Otherwise I might involve myself in similar verbal contortions to those of Mr. Ford. In his next sentence he states: 'What I have in mind is that there was a great deal of Freedom at Mishmar Haemek, and there was almost nothing but Spontaneity in the Shakespeare project, *but only within certain bounds and in certain directions*'. Now, what *is* meant by 'almost nothing but Spontaneity', and moreover Spontaneity 'only within certain bounds', etc. Such muddled phraseology seems to me to defy analysis. I have rarely come across a clearer attempt to eat one's cake and have it. Mr. Ford seeks the approval which attaches to the use of certain key-words; and like 'democracy' in the hands of a Soviet apologist, 'Freedom' affords just the right sanction to disguise the extremely, the dangerously restricted nature of the educational scheme he offers us. Mr. Ford, however, wriggles for a little longer; and then he produces this: 'There is a valid sense in which a precise and perhaps even a limited point of view was imposed at Mishmar Haemek' (the reluctance with which Mr. Ford faces the implications of Mishmar Haemek produces the slurring

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social usefulness, at the expense of less tangible but none the less real further ends, a habit which our age is all too frequently willing to adopt. In any case, there still remains the man's responsibility to himself. To escape from the world to become a cobbler may well be a subtle though none the less real way of evading responsibilities which are much greater where university teachers are concerned than for cobblers. The ethical implications of the parable of the talents at least deserves some consideration.

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phrases 'valid sense'—the implication being that there are other 'senses' as well—and 'perhaps even'). He continues: 'But imposition of this kind—*and to an extent all education is an imposition*—can take very different forms; and though Mr. Bantock assures us that he is not a bottom-beater, neither, it seems, is he an exponent of the less obtrusive methods of imposing one's point of view'. (My italics). How Mr. Ford knows what methods I favour, I don't know—except that I am not a bottom-beater. I was concerned to establish the fact of imposition on the part of the teachers, whose civilizing function within the scope of the tradition I have indicated I was assuming; I wanted a teacher-imposed system, not a child-directed one. And now, the whirligig of time indeed brings in his revenges. For what Mr. Ford was at first at pains to deny me, he is now, in the pursuit of his own ends (which differ from mine in the way I have made clear) forced to grant. How subtle the imposition is at Mishmar Haemek we have no means of assessing, for we are given no indication of what happens to children who wish to deviate from the party line. But as learning is obviously not the primary consideration and the standard (that of the slowest) not very high, it may not be unjust to suggest that the subtle method of not teaching the child to seek beyond the demands of the immediate is perhaps the way that most recommends itself to the purposes the authorities have in mind.

For in what, does the boasted 'large measure' of freedom at Mishmar Haemek consist? The children are not 'free' to become anything but settlers; they are not 'free' to learn at a rate beyond that of the slowest; they are not 'free' to pursue any but a very limited range of topics with a distinctly propagandist flavour. Such restraints are indeed inevitable on those who choose or have chosen for them, specific and limited social ends. For as the social is only one aspect of man, the child is in fact being confined to what amounts to a very limited range of human possibilities, and can become 'free' only within those very restricting limits. We therefore arrive at the interesting but paradoxical situation that whereas Mr. Ford seems to regard himself as the upholder of freedom against my heavy-handed pedagogy, it is really I who stand for the larger freedom. For whatever else culture may be (in which I have proclaimed myself a believer), it is the product and involves the experience of individual minds which, though aware of social relationships and their importance for man, are also aware of certain autonomies of the individual, and in many cases, of possibilities that go beyond both the individual and the social spheres. Culture therefore involves at least a consideration of something beyond the purely social; and the pursuit of culture *liberates* the human mind in a manner which the pursuit of a specific social end would not make possible. Why Mr. Ford should regard such a reversion to a more primitive, almost tribal structure, which he describes as the pattern of existence at Mishmar Haemek, as a significant human advance, I am unable to discover. And indeed, I suspect all such present day attempts at social integration. For true social

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integration can only be the by-product of the pursuit of some end which is not itself. To make social integration consciously the aim of human endeavour is to make something which is essentially human and imperfect—liable, that is to say, to the inadequacies of the planners of social integration—the standard, and thus to introduce immediately the possibilities of those disintegrative factors which criticism—to which the plan must, by its specifically human nature, forever be open—of the schemes would involve. Hence the necessity of the concentration camp to those societies which have made man-made social plans the basis of their desire for social integration. For only thus can such criticism be suppressed, and the plan go forward.

But now we must attempt to discover how this paradoxical reversal of situation between Mr. Ford and myself has arisen. It comes, I think, from a failure to appreciate certain ambiguities in the word 'method'. Mr. Ford seems to imagine that because he can bandy the blessed word 'project' about, he automatically assures his children a 'large measure of freedom'. And here he falls into the error of those who believe that freedom is the prerogative of a method and not the product of the accomplishment of an end. For all but the most temporary of human freedoms is dependent upon the discipline that has produced it. Nothing could be more obviously untrue than the statement that man is born free.

Now, a concentration upon the idea of 'method' as the word is commonly interpreted, tends to hide the truth of this. For the common use of the word conceals the essential disciplinary function which a fuller considerations of method reveals. There is, in fact, inherent in every field of learning, a specific 'method' of study which imposes itself, regardless of the idiosyncrasies of the learner. This method requires as of necessity the comprehension of a series of logical relationships, the omission of any one of which may well inhibit further progress—a fact which can be seen most clearly in mathematics, but which is a feature to a greater or lesser degree of all 'disciplines'. Thus, in this meaning of the word, to speak of 'free methods' is to perpetrate a contradiction in terms.

But this meaning of the term is all too frequently lost sight of. Instead, the word comes to refer to aspects of pupil-teacher relationship and to certain irrelevances which the teacher consciously introduces into the teaching of 'subjects' in order to make the matter more palatable to immature minds. It is to this sense of the word that Mr. Ford refers when he states that 'a conscientious teacher concerns himself endlessly about his teaching-methods, not in order to avoid encouraging a point of view, but so that his encouragement shall not be dogmatic or authoritarian'. But indeed, a teacher's encouragement can, in many spheres, be nothing but 'dogmatic and authoritarian'. Even in the province of values, there is a reasonably well defined hierarchy of taste which tradition, for those who care to seek it, has handed down and the reason for which, for those who are perpetually concerned to demand reasons, is usually susceptible to concrete demonstration and analysis. But

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in other subjects the dogmatism is inherent in their development, is an essential part of that 'authority' of the subject to which reference has been made above, and to which the teacher merely becomes the transmitting medium. Yet, of course, as a transmitting medium, the teacher need do no harm by adopting 'methods'—in the sense referred to in *this* paragraph—which introduce certain extraneous considerations (extraneous, that is, to the proper development of the subject in hand), in the hope of making the matter more easily assimilable, *provided always the fact that such considerations are extraneous is never lost sight of.* An easy example is provided by the introduction of social purpose into the teaching of arithmetic. The validity of the arithmetical processes of addition is quite independent of whether bills, marbles or what have you are being totted up. But adding up the household accounts is a quite legitimate 'method' of affording immediate relevance to processes which otherwise might be deemed too abstract for the child.[6]

But my italicized caveat in the last paragraph is one that is all too readily forgotten by those whose concern is for 'method' in Mr. Ford's use of the word. Thus the social purpose of adding up bills becomes the aim of learning arithmetic, which is to substitute the social purpose of tackling the household accounts as the real end of the learning of arithmetic instead of the learning of arithmetic itself. This inevitably involves certain restrictions on the pursuit of that subject and the further purposes, which may or may not be immediately social, which such pursuit would allow for. The fact that with some children the attainment of such a limited end is all that can be expected of their mental capacities is no reason for imposing such a limited aim on the rest.[7] And though I would not necessarily disapprove of such a limited aim for such children (together with other such activities extraneous to the study of arithmetic as the building of toy shops), I would emphasize the necessity of always being quite clear what it is we are about. But my observation of modern educational practice makes me think that we are not always by any means clear as to what we are about,

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[6]Though at the same time, it is worth noting that, whatever may have been the *origin* of arithmetical processes (whether social in the manner suggested by Hogben: *Mathematics for the Million* or not), the knowledge of the arithmetical process is now necessarily antecedent to its application. Thus the child only knows that three bars of chocolate at threepence a bar cost ninepence after he knows that three lots of three make nine. In other words the notion of number imposes itself upon this particular aspect of the social situation of chocolate buying.

[7]There is, sometimes, an essay to be written, correlating the shift in the balance of political power with the changed emphasis in educational practice. For it seems to me that an increasing concern for the needs of specific children—the less gifted, those whose capacities are limited narrowly to the sphere of the 'social'—has led to many of our present attitudes.

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that all too frequently we are placing far too much emphasis on the means and tending to substitute the possible end inherent in the means for the original end which the means were intended to subserve. And this leads to our mistaking a temporary and purely local freedom inherent in the means for a real and lasting freedom that can only emerge at the successful accomplishment of the original end. For though a child may indeed become free to shop, he is not free in the realm of those higher mathematical processes that are lost sight of in accomplishment of the immediate social purpose, which should be a by-product only to the learning of mathematics, though a useful one.[8]

That we are not always clear about the implications of our engagements is clear, I think, from a consideration of Mr. Ford's means for overcoming drudgery, of which he 'throws out a hint'. He begins by deprecating the idea that 'Facts like multiplication tables and simple arithmetic' (among others) are things that 'simply have to be learnt by heart'; it is such an attitude, he suspects, which produces children who 'just can't do maths.', etc. Mr. Ford then proceeds to indicate how such a regrettable state of affairs can be avoided. If, 'suitably presented, of course', 'each subject is treated as a system of a particular kind, subserving certain ends and bearing distinct relations to material reality, many children find their feet far more quickly'.

Now I do not feel at all happy about the terms in which this is set out. For indeed, what ends that a child is capable of assimilating can some of the subjects with which Mr. Ford deals (arithmetic, history and languages) be said to subserve? That the subjects in question should be explicable to anyone in the terms which Mr. Ford suggests I shall show to be highly doubtful. I take it that the ends which Mr. Ford regards the various subjects as subserving are social ones. That, from his individual remarks on specific subjects, and from the knowledge one has of Mr. Ford's position, would seem a fair inference. Now, while I have no objection to the use of temporary expedients of the type that I have indicated being used as a means to further progress, to make as a precondition to that further progress an understanding of such social ends seems to me an example of putting the cart before the horse, of mistaken emphasis. It provides a further example of expenditure of energy on irrelevancies, leading to a possible undesirable delimitation of the syllabus. For Mr. Ford continues: 'They (the children) develop a confidence about the subject in proportion as they understand the kind of thing it is; and this can

[8]An extreme example of this confusion, leading to a perversion of ends, is provided in an account of a training college, published a short time ago. As *a feature of their English course*, the students erected a model post-office. (*Times Educational Supplement*, February 21st, 1948, p. 108). What possible benefit to the study of English would derive from such a side-tracking of time and effort I find it difficult to comprehend.

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provoke sufficient excitement and wonder to help them take the drudgery in their stride'. This modern habit—an offshoot, I suspect, of nineteenth-century utilitarian rationalism—of requiring the child to comprehend the 'nature' of what he is doing, to appreciate the 'reasons' for pursuing one course of study rather than another, makes the child's experience of possible social situations the limiting factor in educational advance; for such 'reasons', to be comprehensible, can only be based on a very limited range of possible social repercussions. It is the relative emphasis that is disquieting. There are introduced two categories: 'the kind of thing' a subject is—by which I take Mr. Ford to mean possible correlations with social experience—and the subject itself. And it would appear that the former is to take priority, as 'confidence about the new subject' (whatever that may mean) is dependent upon it. No piece of knowledge, however, is completely explicable in terms of anything else; and Mr. Ford's conception of the process of learning, because of the mistaken stress mentioned above, seems to me pedagogically unsound. Nor need Mr. Ford regard my objections as hair-splitting; for when, in concrete educational situations, the building of post offices mentioned in footnote eight becomes part of the English course, there is obviously some very serious confusion of thought at work. And whereas Mr. Ford might well agree with me in condemning such activities as part of the English syllabus, he seems insufficiently aware that the course of education he favours gives an impetus to just such perverted undertakings.

Again, Mr. Ford seems to me unduly optimistic if he thinks that understanding, in his terms, necessarily provokes wonder and excitement sufficient to overcome drudgery. (He introduces, I know, the saving words 'help them to' before 'overcome'; but the terms of his assertion invite a strong repository of faith in the efficacy of such understanding). The theory of the unconscious assimilation of unpalatable facts through temporary excitements of the play variety—'play' providing a social situation within which the working of the subject can be 'understood'—is one that in the experience of many teachers with whom I have discussed the subject is not borne out by the results. For teachers are becoming increasingly sceptical that by investing the subject with an immediate social significance of this sort (on which the success of the 'free method' largely depends) one necessarily provokes anything more than a temporary interest which in far too many children tends to peter out as soon as difficulties are encountered. So that even where the learning of tables is concerned, teachers need continually to impose their wills in the matter; and even after the results of play have been assimilated, there may still be necessary the mediæval barbarities of drill! (And whereas the gain in social intercourse that results from 'play' methods may to some minds compensate for the lack of mathematical accuracy, it is as well to know what are likely to be the consequences of our new habits, and of the restrictive character of the standards we are adopting).[9]

Mr. Ford's specific prescriptions for individual subjects go to

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confirm what has been written above, as well as to provoke strong dissent on their own account. A child—we are dealing with the beginners, be it remembered, those who are bothered with 'Facts like the multiplication tables and simple arithmetic, irregular verbs and the dates of history'—is to be 'shown that numerical relations are not a factual law of the universe but an intellectual convention, that the "facts of history" are only a selection made and interpreted according to a given system of beliefs and from a given standpoint, and that irregular verbs are a fact only to the extent that they are seen as a product of social and cultural processes'. It is hard to believe that Mr. Ford is serious, or that I have understood him correctly. For even the saving clause 'suitably expressed, of course', will not hide the absurdity of his pretensions. I can think, in my years of sixth form teaching, of a very few boys who might grasp such neo-Marxist conceptions, even suitably expressed. For indeed, to give only one example, I fail to see how anyone could appreciate the idea that the 'facts of history' are only a selection made and interpreted, etc.—insofar as they are—who has not already acquired a considerable number of such facts. Mr. Ford's ideas might well be dismissed as the indiscretions of a very inexperienced teacher, though unfortunately they are the sort that bring educational theory into such sad repute, were it not that the 'irrelevancies' of Mr. Ford's considerations—irrelevant, that is to say, to the pedagogical purposes Mr. Ford has in mind—provide a rough insight into the nature of certain epistemological errors which are adversely affecting modern educational theory. For what meaning of the word 'fact' could Mr. Ford produce that would deny a French verb a reality within a specific linguistic framework known as the French language? Yet he assures us that 'irregular verbs are a fact *only* to the extent that they are seen as a product of social and cultural processes' (never mind what relevance information about such processes would have to a child who was seeking to express himself in a foreign tongue for the first time).

But the dangerous results of Mr. Ford's attempt to deny significance to the various facts within their particular specific frameworks is seen in the next paragraph. Mr. Ford considers it a waste that teachers should be left to develop their own subjects,

[9]Two comments come aptly to hand. One is by a correspondent of *The New Statesman* (Sept. 4th, 1948): 'American academic standards are lower than in our own schools . . . American schools . . . have been more adventurous than English State schools in trying out new methods. They are also more democratic, and they have paid the price of experimentation and democracy in lower standards of attainment'. The other comes from *English in Schools*, from an article by Miss Marion Hope Parker: ' . . . the result of the unfolding bud psychology has been to turn the primary school largely into an organization for developing cheerful social instincts. Its product usually has a healthy body but it is not safe to *assume* any further qualification other than a lack of self-consciousness . . .'.

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'because the full potentialities of their subjects are far more easily realised where the education of the school is treated as a developing whole, divisible only for the sake of convenience into distinct ends or distinct subjects or distinct themes'. Now Mr. Ford's declaration that it is only for the sake of *convenience* that the work of a school is divisible into distinct subjects merits attention. For one thing, it is an idea that, under various guises of expression, is bandied about a good deal. The project system, for instance, represents a distinct attempt to break down the so-called 'artificial barriers' between the subjects, by showing their interconnections based on a central theme, or centre of interest. Another frequent criticism of the study of separate subjects is that it leads to over-specialization. And so on.

Mr. Ford's assertion suggests that such division into 'subjects' is not obligatory, is not something imposed by the nature of the subjects, but serves some much less vital purpose which he sums up under the term 'convenience'. Consideration, however, seems to me to show that such a belief cannot be seriously maintained. For though various subjects may be interrelated in certain ways, and the influence of events in one field of activity may have repercussions in other fields, in no way can such repercussions interfere with the significance of the 'event' within its own discipline and its essential correlations with other 'events' within the same field of study. Thus the knowledge that the wars of the seventeenth century stimulated the desire for the solution of certain problems of ballistics and thus influenced, in ways which would need careful definition in specific instances, the nature of the investigation into the physical sciences, in no way affects the validity and 'reality' of such discoveries as were made, which are subject to the rules of verification proper to their own field, and which, once accepted as verified, take their place within a specific scientific framework. Thus in no way could it be said that the study of the history of the seventeenth century and the study of certain problems in ballistics are divided 'only for the sake of convenience'. The division is one that is imposed by the natures of the two 'subjects' and the correlations necessary within their own particular spheres of validity; though I would not deny that such scientific problems as we have been considering have, *considered as historical phenomena*, as problems, that is to say, that achieved solution at a specific time, their relevance to the study of seventeenth century history, and thus belong to the field of historical relations as well.

What Mr. Ford means by the education of the school being treated 'as a developing whole' I am not quite sure; I suspect that it is one of those deceptively ambiguous phrases which sound good and do away with the effort of clear thinking. ('Wholeness' is in particular favour at the moment—'the whole man' and all that; another related key-word of course is 'integration').[10] Mr. Ford

[10]A source of some uneasiness at the moment is the rather too glib way in which a number of teachers are embracing a bastard subject,

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continues: 'This approach (*i.e.*, the developing whole business) is often the natural outcome of a system which keeps the child in the centre of the picture. Because each child is an entity, the education

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usually known as 'Social Studies', in an attempt to give a coherence to their work which they think the normal subject division lacks. This involves the introduction of some topic, usually of a social nature, within the scope of the child's immediate experience (such as, for instance, 'The town in which we live'), and using this as an agency for investigation into the various fields of study that relate themselves to this topic and (and this is the point) only in so far as they relate themselves to this topic. Thus the history of the town will be studied, its geographical situation, its economic life, its social services, etc. In fact, it is a project of a particular kind. Now such study can be valuable provided teachers remember:

(*a*) The significance of the specific information within each field of study (history, geography, etc.) will take its meaning to a considerable extent from its relation to other facts within the same field. Thus we sometimes hear it said that 'our town' gained its specific historical importance from, say, its geographical position on a river. But such historical importance is by no means explicable solely in terms of geographical position. There will also be a chain of historical occurrences which will have led to the foundation of a town on just that spot at that time. Thus the answer to the question 'Why did "our town" become a market town in the fourteenth century?' is not 'Because it stood on a river', though such a position may have been a contributing factor, but because a series of events have occurred within the field properly to be termed historical processes which have led to its foundation at just that time. An understanding of such events and therefore an understanding of why 'our town' came to be a market town at just such a time is therefore only possible in the light of information which a child cannot hope to have unless the subject division of 'history' is maintained. The necessity of subject teaching is thus not destroyed by the introduction of such projects, as some teachers seem to imagine.

(*b*) The study of specific topics like 'our town' inevitably implies a narrowing of the possible range of human experience available to the child. Now going from the known to the unknown—which the modern educationalist makes the basis of this type of instruction—has much to be said in its favour, provided the child realizes the contingency of the as yet unknown. This can only derive from his acceptance of the 'authority' of the subject; for the topic of the project quickly exhausts itself in a way in which the subject does not.

Thus such studies are by no means to be avoided. But they are to be treated with considerable care for their limitations. They do not provide a satisfactory solution to the problem of the content of education. They are, of course, largely the result of that modern habit of regarding all human situations as the consequence of 'social processes'.

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which is built around the child is most often a unified affair as well'. What does Mr. Ford imply by keeping 'the child in the centre of the picture'? In any *educational* situation (the 'picture', I take it, to which Mr. Ford refers) there are necessarily two elements—the child, and the knowledge the child is to acquire. To regard the child as the centre instead of as one of the two elements that have to combine, is to lay oneself open to just those errors I have examined in my previous article (pp. 85-88) in a way which Mr. Ford does nothing to answer. The second sentence quoted above invites one or two preliminary questions. What is the function of the phrase 'most often'? Are we to understand that it is possible to build around a child (who is by definition always an entity) an education which is not a 'unified affair'? In which case, what will be the disintegrating factor in such a construction? It obviously can't be the child. But more important it is to ask what, in the cases where the education is duly unified, is to provide the unifying element? For 'is built around' suggests the necessity of a builder. Does he impose the unity on the structure? If he does, then his unification will be subject to those imperfections which are inevitable in human constructions and will be open to destruction, disintegration, as it were, at the hands of others. If it is the child, as an entity, that is to provide the unifying principle, how can such an entity within one class of substances impose a unity on something which belongs to quite a different order of substances? It may be that Mr. Ford, in making the child the centre of the picture, means us to understand that he refers to those educational processes which are relevant to the immediate needs and interests of the child; in which case these needs and interests impose a temporary and quite artificial coherence ('artificial', that is to say, to the nature of the various bodies of knowledge) within the various disciplines on which the child's needs and interests impinge. And if 'unification' in these terms is what Mr. Ford means, he will find himself affording approval to an extreme form of subjectivism which destroys any idea of a 'system', which is open to all the objections to which such extreme subjectivism is commonly open (some of which emerge by implication in my last article) and which makes nonsense of his previous testimony to his 'profound belief' that 'taste is not relative'.

I trust that I shall have by now made clear what I regard as some of Mr. Ford's confusions of thought and that I shall have, by concrete analysis and demonstration, made good my right to pass on Mr. Ford's article the strictures that I enunciated in my second paragraph. I am particularly anxious to avoid any imputation that my desire has been merely to score off Mr. Ford. I hope I have understood, been fair to, his case. I am grateful to him for taking the trouble to reply to my article. I am grateful to him for affording me the opportunity to undertake certain clarifications—as I hope they will appear—in my position. It is possible that Mr. Ford might still assert that my *prescriptions* are still not sufficiently clear. To this criticism I would reply as follows. To provide prescriptions, within Mr. Ford's meaning of the term, has not been primarily

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my aim. The educational world at the moment teems with such prescriptions. To reveal what I regard as the ambiguities and confusions inherent in many such prescriptions seems to me the most positive contribution that any writer on educational theory can at this time make. I hope that Mr. Ford will accept my assurance that I am as alive as he is to the necessity for decency in pupil-teacher relationships. I trust he will allow me to aver that I regard research into the best means by which the learner can be persuaded to enter into his heritage—I use the word advisedly—as a valid form of educational enterprise. But I am alarmed lest too great a concentration on investigation into such 'methods' should blind educationalists to the fact that there is taking place, subtly but none the less surely, a decided shift in the focus of educational attention; and that this shift manifests itself in an increasing inability to conceive valid ends to education. The exhilaration of new-found 'methods' seems to me to be contributing to the concealment of a very real restriction of scope and of a dangerous tendency to confuse means with ends, a state of affairs which is likely to lead, which indeed in the opinion of many teachers with whom I have discussed the matter, already has led, to a very definite decline in the quality of educational accomplishment in the country. By drawing attention to such a state of affairs, by asserting the objectivity of, and the authority inherent in the various aspects of human knowledge, I hope to contribute positively to a more fundamental effort to tackle the whole nature of educational undertakings as they effect the day-to-day routine of our schools and colleges; so that while what is good in the new shall not be lost sight of, the essential need to conceive adequate ends within the tradition I have noted shall be clearly recognized.

G. H. BANTOCK.

ANNOUNCEMENT

THE GREAT TRADITION, by F. R. Leavis
(Chatto and Windus, 12/6).

In accordance with *Scrutiny* practice, this book by an editor, will not be reviewed.

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COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

THE PROGRESS OF POESY.

> 'In 1930, in the shadow of, but not too close to, Mr. J. Alfred Prufrock, the *Poems* of Mr. W. H. Auden first appeared. Mr. T. S. Eliot's *Waste Land* had prepared the way by showing out the Georgians as gracefully but as finally as his Bloomsbury lady pouring out tea'.

As has been remarked before in these pages, there is a recurrent embarrassment facing anyone who is concerned for the contemporary function of criticism: the call for certain observations and judgments comes endlessly, and certain things have unavoidably to be said again and again, or there is no point in offering to deal with the contemporary scene; yet there is a limit to profitable reiteration, and —is *this* (comes the question) once more an occasion that, after so much abstinence, must not be ignored? The passage quoted above opens a full-page review in the *Times Literary Supplement* (October 23, 1948) of W. H. Auden's *The Age of Anxiety*,[1] and the review does seem an occasion that one must take—if only because of a recent appreciative reference in these pages to the *Times Literary Supplement* (which tends as often to strike dismay as to command applause—there is, it should be added at once, in the issue in question a good front-page article on Henry Adams). The effect of the passage is not, as might have been supposed, an unfortunate accident of expression. The critic himself doesn't actually say, as the acclaimers of that Poetic Renaissance in which Mr. Auden played the leading part did, that Auden superseded Eliot, but his commentary may fairly be said to be in resonance with that view. That is, if we are to grant that what he offers is serious criticism, then the fashionable relegation of Mr. Eliot that marked the early nineteen-thirties was critically respectable: it was the supersession, as the reigning power in poetry, of one creative genius by another, who understood better how to satisfy the needs of the time.

As a matter of fact, we are left in doubt whether the critic considers Mr. Eliot a really major poet: he speaks of his 'grey unruffled language' and his 'gentle and exquisite language'. However, it is hardly worth while to pursue the evaluative implications of these astonishing phrases. We need do no more than contemplate the way in which the critic gives as grounds for treating Mr. Auden as a great poet the very characteristics that make him so decidedly *not* one—and make him something not seriously to be compared with Mr. Eliot. Mr. Auden's poetry, we are told,

> 'was philosophy undigested but illuminated by a poet's intuition. It was poetry taken from the same events as those recorded in the daily newspapers. Its range was as sensational, its attitude

[1]Reviewed in *Scrutiny*, Vol. XV, No. 2.

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> as unpedantic, its acuteness in reading the signs of the weather a hundred times greater . . . For good measure he threw into his verse, like toys, the names of Freud and Rilke; he made the Mother-symbol smart; he made poetry out of dance lyrics . . . '

Of this poetry we are told that it was 'politically honest and self-searching', that it 'could shame a generation into political awareness, a personal guilt' and that it 'diagnosed the causes of the struggle correctly and clearsightedly'. Mr. Auden's honesty there is no need to question; it may perhaps be said to manifest itself in the openness with which his poetry admits that it doesn't know how serious it supposes itself to be. He was no doubt 'self-searching', just as a thousand Public-School boys going up to the University in those days were 'self-searching'. But to talk of his being 'correct' and 'clearsighted' in 'diagnosis' is about as absurd a misuse of words as can be imagined. It was not clearsightedness that made him an irresistible influence. The 'political awareness' and the 'personal guilt' into which he 'shamed a generation' were of a kind that it cost them very little to be shamed into. They asked for nothing better, and his poetry stilled any uncomfortable suspicion that there might be something better (if less comforting) to ask for. There it was, flatteringly modern and sophisticated, offering an intellectual and psychological profundity that didn't challenge them to any painful effort or discipline, and assuring them that in wearing a modish Leftishness they could hold up their heads in a guaranteed rightness—for the play with Depressed Areas, rusty machinery, and the bourgeois Dance of Death had essentially *not* the function of destroying complacency. No wonder they took more kindly to him than to Mr. Eliot, who had no such attractions to offer.

All this has been said in *Scrutiny* before. The recall is prompted by so disconcerting a reminder that the conditions that account for the arrest of Mr. Auden's remarkable talent at the stage of undergraduate 'brilliance' are not less potent now than they were. Our critic says that Mr. Auden 'was the Oxford intellectual with a bag of poetic squibs in his pocket', without seeming to realize that he was the undergraduate intellectual—permanently undergraduate and representing an immaturity that the ancient universities, not so long ago, expected their better undergraduates to transcend. It is the more disconcerting in that one can't avoid the suspicion (the signs are strong) that in this criticism we have a voice from the university —and not, of course, a junior one. It judges Mr. Auden's last book a failure ('his one dull book, his one failure'), but we get no hint of any perceived relation between this failure and the earlier career that the reviewer has described.

If Mr. Auden's successor doesn't become acquainted with serious criticism and the standards of maturity at the university he will not readily find help towards remedying the lack when he enters the larger literary world. The *Times Literary Supplement* critic's way of seeing in Mr. Auden's brilliant topicality the major poet's kind of authority called to mind a number of *Horizon* (July, 1947) that had been lying by some months among the 'documents'

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and signs of the times. In an editorial 'Comment' we read:

> 'In order to prepare an edition of essays from *Horizon* for translation into German it was necessary last week to run through all ninety odd numbers. . . . many of the fireworks in earlier numbers which achieved immediate popularity are now inclined to appear superficial and shoddy. One is also conscious of a change of policy which would appear to be justified. This change is expressed in our belief that the honeymoon between literature and action, one so promising, is over. We can see, looking through these old *Horizons*, a left-wing and sometimes revolutionary political attitude among writers, heritage of Guernica and Munich, boiling up to a certain aggressive optimism in the war years, gradually declining after D-day and soon after the victorious general election despondently fizzling out. It would be too easy to attribute this to the policy of the editors, their war-weariness, and advancing years. The fact remains that a Socialist Government besides doing practically nothing to help artists and writers (unless the closing down of magazines during the fuel crisis can be interpreted as an aid to incubation), has also quite failed to stir up either intellect or imagination; the English renaissance, whose false dawn we have so enthusiastically greeted, is further away than ever'.

Here, in these guileless reflections and avowals, we have an idea of the function of an intellectual literary organ corresponding to the *Times Literary Supplement* writer's idea of the poet. The nature of the 'acuteness in reading the signs of the weather' lauded in both cases is obvious. The consequences for criticism of *Horizon's* idea of its own function are manifested on a large scale in the later pages of the same number. Further on in the 'Comment' we read:

> 'In the light of the comparative failure of the "progressive" movement of the last few years to rise above intelligent political journalism into the realms of literature, we must look elsewhere, either to the mad and lonely, or to those who have with a certain angry obstinacy meticulously cultivated their garden. Among these the Sitwells shine out, for during the darkest years of the war they managed not only to produce their best work, to grow enormously in stature, but to find time to be of immense help to others. Many poets and writers were consoled by their encouragement as well as by their intransigent example, and so this number, at the risk of the inevitable accusations that we support a literary clique, is wholeheartedly dedicated to them. It includes a new poem by Miss Sitwell, an essay on her later poetry by Sir Kenneth Clark which mentions her most recent work *The Shadow of Cain* (published by John Lehmann, and among much else a magnificent anti-atomic protest) and a new fragment of Sir Osbert's autobiography in which the Father-Son conflict is treated with his engaging *aigre-douceur de vivre*'.

Dr. Edith Sitwell, then, is a great poet, with an established acceptance that would have seemed incredible if foretold ten years

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ago (there are now—Yeats being dead—Edith Sitwell and T. S. Eliot) and Sir Osbert's autobiography is a glory of contemporary English literature.[2]

If a serious attempt should be made to assert a different (and traditional) idea of the function of criticism in a world in which *Horizon's* idea of it reigns, and in which the intransigence of the Sitwells avails to such exemplary effect, then it will appear as it does to the writer of another document that lies to hand: Mr. John Hayward. In *Prose Literature since 1939*, published for the British Council, he refers in a passing mention to the 'minority group' of critics (led apparently by the 'cold intellectual', Dr. F. R. Leavis), 'whose methodical and uncompromising destruction of reputations periodically enlivens the pages of the hypercritical but bracing magazine *Scrutiny*'.

It would of course be hypercritical to suggest (though Americans and foreigners in the present writer's hearing have said it) that nothing could be worse for the prestige and influence of British Letters abroad than Mr. Hayward's presentment of the currency-values of Metropolitan literary society and the associated University *milieux* as the distinctions and achievements of contemporary England.

> 'No work of the period, at all events, has provoked livelier or more intelligent discussion among the critically-minded. Its merits and faults have been widely debated—to the dismay, doubtless, of its detractors, who, having dismissed the book in its original limited issue as the darling of a coterie, were to see 20,000 copies of two ordinary editions sold out on publication. By that time "Palinurus" had been identified as Cyril Connolly, editor of the literary monthly *Horizon*, and leader of the intellectual *avant-garde*'.
>
> 'Few contemporary writers care so much about language as Connolly; know so much about its resources; use them with such respect'.[3]

Here we have the approach, but no quoting can suggest the completeness and consistency with which the job is done. Among the many names receiving distinguished mention is that of the Warden of Wadham:

> 'Like David Cecil, Bowra is above all concerned with the writer as artist, and with his books as works of art. His criticism is essentially humanistic, deeply rooted in and nourished by the civilization of ancient Greece. It is as unusual as it is welcome to

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[2]'Next week Sir Osbert and Miss Edith Sitwell begin a lecture tour in America described as "a lecture-manager's tragedy" on account of its briefness compared with the thirst of the American public to hear and see these two peculiarly English geniuses'.
Sunday Times, November 7, 1948.

[3]Mr. Connolly's use of language, etc., was discussed by R. G. Lienhardt in *Scrutiny*, Vol. XIII, No. 3.

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find a professional classical scholar competent to write with authority as well as enthusiasm on subjects as various as the European epic and contemporary European poetry'.

The Warden of Wadham, it can now be added, has just applied his classical scholar's ripeness and percipience to an extended appreciation of the poetry of Edith Sitwell (*Edith Sitwell*, Lyrebird Press).

Mr. Hayward's survey ends on this note of uplift:

'The integrity of the individual writer can best be defended from all the forces currently arrayed against it, by an attitude of absolute intransigence towards the philistine and all his works. Not only in the immediate post-war era but during the years of man's painful spiritual recovery which lie ahead, such an attitude must be preserved if, out of disintegration, a scheme of values is to arise and out of disillusionment a dynamic faith in the power of the printed word to express the finest operations of human thought and sensibility'.

We may rely on the Sitwells to tell us who the philistine is. Can we rely on *Horizon* and Mr. Hayward's majority array of warm[4] British intellectuals (backed by the British Council) to foster uncompromisingly the necessary attitude of absolute intransigence?

F.R.L.

SOME MARGINAL NOTES TO 'A STUDY OF HISTORY'

The abridgement of the first six volumes of this work was published two years ago. It has never been reviewed here. Such a book, indeed, does not attract the historian competent to meet Professor Toynbee on his own ground; a reviewer able to speak of the value of Professor Toynbee's scholarship will scarcely be satisfied to take, as his opening, a mere abridgement however heavily marked with the author's approval.

A book of this sort, however, is presumably intended for a far wider public than that qualified to appreciate its author's merits within his own field of study. Few people indeed have the breadth of reading and reference which would enable them to move with ease through even a fraction of the material which Professor Toynbee has abundantly at his disposal. It is, perhaps, a reflection on modern university education, but it is so. Certainly, the general reader may be assumed to be without the knowledge which would

[4]The warm intellectual is not, like the cold kind, offensively highbrow: however intransigent, he promotes cosiness. (The inclusive, yet discriminating, selectiveness of Mr. Hayward's 'Select Bibliography' is instructive)—Unless, of course, Mr. Hayward meant to imply that *his* intellectuals are not of the intellectual kind.

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enable him to test Professor Toynbee's evidence and conclusions by his own experience and reading. But the author's learning, however much to be admired, need not in itself over-awe the general reader. He may not be in a position to decide whether the whole, and the best, evidence has been used by Professor Toynbee, or to say whether the inferences from it are sound; but he is in a position to say if the material is handled in a way which carries conviction, and to judge the niceness of the balance between the author's insight and his knowledge. Admiration for a writer's work is only partly to be explained by qualities which can be isolated and analysed; we can see more in an achievement than the sum of its parts. So, if we finally withhold such admiration from the present work, we do so from a sense of deficiency in the whole, a deficiency which can be only uncertainly indicated by our particular comments in the margin.

The abridgement is said to have retained, for the most part, the author's own words, and we take it that the total impression created by the style of this book is Professor Toynbee's own. It is a style with dangerous potentialities, slipping all too easily between incisive and apparently well-supported analysis and generalization, and the elaboration of simile and metaphor. It is not only that well-worn figures of speech are incongruous in that atmosphere of original and trenchant criticism which the eager writing everywhere creates. That Professor Toynbee should, in revision, have over-looked the dull inevitability of such an expression as 'death laid his icy hand on the life of this growing civilization' would be merely a literary failing, had such phrases no part in the general texture of his argument. But when historical material from all sources has been reviewed, and the problem stated in such precise terminology as Professor Toynbee is able to adapt to it, he tends to develop the whole argument further in high metaphor. We do not question the value of such a method where a figure of speech really summarizes, and makes more readily accessible to the imagination, the argument which it punctuates. In the present work, much of the argument is so wide in its scope, and much of the material necessarily so remote, that even a clumsy simile might be of value in helping to accommodate the author's idea in the reader's experience. Some of the metaphors here, however, are allowed to play an important part in the development of a thesis, and may persuade the reader that he has grasped the principles of an argument, when, in fact, leaving historical references far behind, he has been paying a visit to a sick-bed, or led on an expedition up a mountain. When he returns to the level of plain statement which precedes and follows these metaphorical adventures, he is able to see the reason for the parallel, and some readers may even be persuaded that they feel its force. If they do, it is at the cost of slurring over Professor Toynbee's argument for the benefit of sharing his sentiment.

But there is a reason why *A Study of History* could not have been treated in its present form without frequent use of metaphor. Because Professor Toynbee has chosen 'civilizations' as comparable

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social units, he cannot avoid speaking of them as though they were persons. A civilization, as such, has no organization which can be abstracted for comparison, and yet without a high degree of abstraction, comparison is impossible. We define a civilization by a number of complex impressions of style and quality, a manner pervading the way of living of a vague mass of people. Professor Toynbee thinks that it is capable of more precise definition, and sees his civilizations as distinct social and historical units, to which such things as birth, death, sickness, frustration, struggles and triumphs, are constantly happening. From an apparently systematic and scientific comparison of their life-cycles, he leads the reader on to generalizations about the nature of human society and the nature of man. His civilizations, therefore, are bound to be summarized as though they were not only social entities, but persons, with potentialities for right and wrong action in given situations, and even, towards the end of the book, capable of those religious experiences which properly belong to the individual human spirit. The distortions which then damage Professor Toynbee's argument may perhaps be exemplified by his introduction of a quotation from *The Pilgrim's Progress* ('I am for certain informed, said he, that this our city will be burned with fire from Heaven . . . '), when considering the future of our own civilization. In Bunyan, of course, though the threatened disaster is a social disaster, Christian's reaction is that of the individual human soul, responsible for its own salvation. In Professor Toynbee's use, however, Christian becomes 'our civilization', or 'our society', or 'us', thus:

> 'What response to this challenge is Christian going to make? Is he going to look this way and that as if he would run, yet stand still because he cannot tell which way to go? Or will he begin to run and run on crying "Life! Life! Eternal Life!" with his eye set on a shining light, and his feet bound for a distant wicket gate . . . ?'

'Our destiny', says Professor Toynbee, 'depends on our response'. Thus, the criticism of himself and his own way of life which Bunyan forces the individual reader to make for himself, is completely lost by Professor Toynbee. Reflecting upon his own progress, through the progress of Christian, the simplest reader receives instruction which he can understand, and his situation and responsibility are always firmly within the grasp of his imagination and intellect. It is not so when he thinks of the progress of Western Civilization, or even of a smaller and more definite group of people. Then, he is easily persuaded that the situation is so complex that it would be possibly wrong, and certainly futile, to make a decision without further knowledge, and since the knowledge can never appear to be complete enough, so the judgment is indefinitely deferred. It is impossible to have any adequate grasp of such a situation as arises if we are led to think of our society crying 'Life! Life! Eternal Life!' Communities do not act in this way, still less the less homogeneous groups called societies and civilizations; the only sort of

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group for which Professor Toynbee's simplifications would not be entirely misleading would be one which could be shown to share one well-defined faith and assent to one body of dogma. This is clearly not the case in any village, and patently not so in our civilization. In fact, it is part of Professor Toynbee's thesis that internal dissensions on such matters, within a civilization, are important in the development of new civilizations. When very complex issues are made clear by the method described above, one begins to wonder whether such a sentence as

> 'The geneses of all civilizations . . . could be described in the phrase of General Smuts: "Mankind is once more on the move" '

is written without the suggestion of a smile. Perhaps it is an adequate alternative way of putting Professor Toynbee's own expression—that there is 'an alternating rhythm of static and dynamic'.

In neither expression is justice done to the depth of Professor Toynbee's analysis. If all of *A Study of History* were writing of this kind, it would soon discourage comment. But in page after page of careful consideration, Professor Toynbee shows himself aware, to the point of embarrassment, of the errors which may result from a faulty methodology. He is quite explicit about the dangers of every sort of simplification to which, in the end, he is bound partly to commit himself. Having chosen to compare civilizations and not some other social group, and having examined all the possible confusions which may follow a careless use of analogy from the biological and physical sciences, he proceeds to systematize, compare and generalize from his comparisons. He fails to isolate any structural features for his comparison, but by fixing his attention upon doing so, he is unable to concentrate on the alternative possibility—the appraisal of human behaviour and the precise demonstration of its effect within the social sphere of the individual. His generalizations about individuals tend to be less illuminating than a careful examination of their lives and actions, separately considered, would have been. Such a paragraph as the following is an example:

> 'The would-be saviour of a disintegrating society is necessarily a saviour with a sword, but the sword may be either drawn or sheathed. He may be laying about him with his naked weapon, or he may be sitting in state with his blade out of sight in its scabbard as a victor who has "put all his enemies under his feet". He may be a Heracles or a Zeus, a David or a Solomon . . . The classic saviours with the sword have been the captains and princes who have striven to found, or succeeded in founding, or succeeded in rehabilitating, universal states . . . The truth seems to be that a sword which has once drunk blood cannot be permanently restrained from drinking blood again, any more than a tiger which has once tasted human flesh can be prevented

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from becoming a man-eater from that time onwards. The man-eating tiger is, no doubt, a tiger doomed to death . . . '

The study of one man, of militarism in one situation, would have suggested all these general considerations without sacrifice of subtlety, and without distracting the reader's attention with a description of the behaviour of a tiger. This sort of generalization is often found in books on primitive technology, in which we are soberly told, after pages of consideration, that environment, for example, has a limiting, but not finally a determining, effect, upon the lives of those who live in it. The conclusion takes us less far than a consideration of the precise examples on which it is based. Instead of isolating a principle, it summarizes what is apparent to every reader who has carefully gone through numerous examples of the practice, and what in fact, on the basis of a hasty review of his own knowledge, a reader of moderate intelligence would consider to be the likely case. So again, if it should occur to one to ask such a question as 'Do civilizations occur only in easy environments?' one would tend to answer, with Professor Toynbee, that they do not, and of course one would bear in mind that neither do they arise in the Arctic Circle or other difficult environments. But to say they do not, and to say they cannot, are two different matters; the latter, if it were possible, would involve a perception of connections and principles, while the former involves only many descriptions. Professor Toynbee writes as though he were following the ambitious course, while he is really working on more modest lines.

It is not, however, a criticism to say that the conclusions reached by *A Study of History*, whether we agree with them or not, fail to surprise us. In the social studies, the manner in which conclusions are reached is often more interesting than those conclusions themselves. The reader's own conclusions tend to grow out of the orderly arrangement of the author's knowledge, so that, while the author may not prove his own point, the reader may prove quite another point which the book entirely fails to make. Unfortunately, more people are likely to seize upon, and retain, and use, an author's general conclusions, than are prepared or qualified to go through the process of reason and example which gives those conclusions a justification and a context. This abridgement makes a mass of general ideas and arguments available to all-comers, without the labour of following the author through the scholarly industry of justifying them. Here, the conclusions do not grow with and from the steady unfolding of the material; evidence is adduced to illustrate a view, though it has the appearance of supporting it. The 'ideas' are separable from the situations in which, alone, they have a definite meaning. Thus, at one point, Professor Toynbee considers the perfect adjustment of the Eskimos to their difficult environment, but he treats the matters as though it were possible to be sure of the nature of the 'choice' which resulted in their specialization, explicitly comparing this intense concentration upon

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certain activities with other peoples who 'retained' their unspecialized manner of life, and were therefore the more able to develop civilizations. But however likely it may seem that there was a time when the Eskimos, and their now civilized neighbours, started, as it were, to adapt themselves to their different environments, such a situation remains speculative, the evidence for it being based entirely on what we can observe at the present moment. Thus, what Professor Toynbee is actually doing in arguing thus is to explain the present situation by inferences from the present situation for which no independent evidence exists:

> 'Whatever the historical incentive may have been, it is evident that, at some point in their history, the forefathers of the Eskimos grappled audaciously with the Arctic environment, and adapted their life to its exigencies with consummate skill. To prove this assertion it is only necessary to recite the catalogue of material appliances which the Eskimos have elaborated or invented: . . . '.

And in generalizing from Eskimo and other cultures which failed to develop into civilizations, I fail to see the object of speaking of them all as being distinguished by the presence of 'caste', when in order to do so the hunting dogs of the Eskimo have to be regarded as a 'caste', structurally equivalent to the slaves of the 'Osmanlis, and the helots of Sparta'. To say further that the Eskimos' achievement is made at the price of discarding as far as possible the infinite variety of human nature and assuming an inflexible animal nature instead seems to me to show a sense of proportion which is unlikely to lead to entirely sound generalizations about Man.

Consider briefly such a different and altogether less ambitious work as Professor R. W. Chambers' essay *On the Continuity of English Prose from Alfred the Great to More and his School*, in order to suggest what it is that Professor Toynbee has not succeeded in doing in his wider field. There, Chambers isolated a tradition of English prose writing and effectively dismissed the popular idea that prose in the vernacular began with Wyclif. To have so treated, in a manner to inspire conviction, a popular fallacy among educated readers, is not merely to change their opinions about a purely academic matter; it is to dispose them to modify attitudes, prejudices, and careless habits of thought, developed through years of hasty and ill-digested reading. It is a criticism and correction of the reader's ignorance, and I see no reason why a historian should not openly admit to this function. It is by such activity in small fields that a modest control can be exercised over the intensity and duration of ill-informed, but ingrained opinions. Unfortunately, such work is rarely treated in the influential weeklies, though in time its effect may be felt even there. Such work makes no claim to general insight into matters not inextricably connected with the instruction it imparts. It offers no platform for public opinion and discussion. *A Study of History*, in its abridged form, does offer such a platform, and is consequently widely known.

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It is a common opinion to-day that the airing of different views about human beliefs and principles is in itself an important and instructive activity, and that no one's opinion is so absurd that he can make no contribution to any general discussion. *A Study of History* was regarded as a stimulating book in this sense, and it lends itself easily, in abridgement, to the play of opinion which forms the staple of weekly journalism and of much educated conversation. But in it, Professor Toynbee makes no attempt to conceal his adherence to one religious faith, and from that point of view, the intention with which the book was written is sufficiently clear. We do not, of course, criticize this intention, or Professor Toynbee's self-committal to one interpretation of the course of history. Unfortunately he tends to treat this interpretation as having been produced by systematic comparisons alone, and not by systematic comparisons directed by a specific religious faith. It is not entirely by a consideration of the evidence contained in *A Study of History* that its author has reached his conclusions. Indeed, one feels that if it were so, those conclusions themselves would be differently phrased:

> 'On this showing, the music that Yin and Yang beats out is the song of creation; and we shall not be misled into fancying ourselves mistaken because, as we give ear, we can catch the note of creation alternating with a note of destruction . . .
>
> 'Creation would not be creative if it did not swallow all things up in itself, including its own opposite'.

Would not his convictions also be differently phrased, if he were to express them without attempting to bring the whole movement of history to support them? A reader may be able to test an author's theories by his own knowledge of the facts, but his final impression of a work of history depends upon more than having caught out the author in a faulty argument or a false date. What I mean is perhaps best summed up in some remarks of Ben Jonson on Horace:

> 'Such was Horace, an author of much civility; and (if anyone among the heathen can be) the best master of both virtue and wisdom; an excellent and true judge upon cause and reason; not because he thought so, but because he knew so, out of use and experience'.

While giving all his reasons for 'thinking so', Professor Toynbee also tends to attempt reasons for 'knowing so'. It is thus that, in spite of the learning of which this abridgement is the least indication, the reader leaves it with less instruction than he might have found profitable, and ideas sufficiently general and numerous to be applied to almost any subject with which he may choose to toy. It is a 'stimulating' book. We do not regard that adjective as an unqualified recommendation for a work so extensive in scope, and serious in intention.

R. G. LIENHARDT.

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TRANSLATION INTO SCOTS

A BRAIRD O THRISTLES, by Douglas Young (Macmillan).

Mr. Douglas Young's poems in *A Braird O Thristles* are mostly in Scots but wear an 'international' aspect which I should like to examine. Since the eighteenth century and in recent practice, Scots, dissociated from uses other than that of poetic composition, has begun to suffer the disabilities of poetic diction. It may be questioned if authentic poetry can come of a language which continues to be used only for poetic practice. (Equally, of course, a language in which poetry is no longer practised perishes from the top downwards). Too often in reading contemporary poems in Scots one experiences the sensation of meeting something one has met before, something done over again, with great accomplishment, after having been done in the ballads for example. For even when the poem is headed 'Til the Andantino frae Gluck's Orpheus', and some attempt is made to break away from the rhythms of the ballads to reproduce the grand operatic manner of the eighteenth century, the phrases are still the familiar ballad phrases.

> Delicatelie kaimit gowden hair
> suldna bind about my hairt sae sair.

We have met the 'kaimit gowden hair' and the 'hairt sae sair' how many times before. It would be worth considering, perhaps, why such a large proportion of these 'international' poems are in popular ballad modes—some of which are a way of getting it both ways as Auden and his school-friends once showed how—you laugh both with and at the people, or you share the primitive horror thrill while at the same time holding superiorly aloof. Mr. Young's Scots poems include translations from French, German, Russian, Lithuanian, Greek, Hebrew and Chinese. If Mr. Young's attitude to Scots resembles Joyce's curiously external attitude to words as objects to be manipulated, he is at the same time an amateur of diverse languages and civilizations after the pattern of Pound. Pound of course was, like Joyce, a man of genius. But his work does illustrate in some of its weaknesses one aspect of our modern trouble. So many diverse civilizations and cultures have flowed together that the one blurs the other until no one of them is felt deeply any longer or realized distinctly. The question of how to make a right use of foreign influences raised by Mr. Young's translations from here, there and everywhere, is therefore a very serious one for us all. Evidently the problem is first not how to relate Scotland to China or Russia but how to relate Scotland to the Europe to which Scotland belongs in the world.

Scots has never passed through the more recent phases of the European mind which English and French have passed through. For that reason Mr. Young's 'The Kirkyaird By The Sea' may be regarded as the most daringly experimental piece of work recently undertaken in Scots. For unless Scots can assimilate the phase

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of the mind to which Valéry and one or two French, English and German poets (and novelists) of the last generation belong, it cannot go on to achieve poetry. For poetry is always contemporary. It has its eternal aspect as it has its temporal aspect. But its temporal aspect is contemporary or nothing; it lives, if it lives at all, in relation to a particular time, and that particular time can be no other than the present. Before poetry in Scots can be contemporary—before it can *be*—it must necessarily have passed through and a little beyond the most recent phase of the civilized consciousness, and that (since the decline of mediæval and Renaissance Italy) has been predominantly French and English in character.

Mr. Young's Scots version of Valéry may be compared with Mr. Cecil Day Lewis's version in English, which is a good example of what is being regarded as poetry in England and which many do not distinguish from what others do distinguish as the authentic modern poetry—Mr. Eliot's Four Quartets. Mr. Day Lewis has the advantage over Mr. Young of an English language that has had a Yeats and an Eliot, near equivalents to a Valéry. On the other hand, Shelley's Adonais echoes rather too audibly through Mr. Day Lewis's version and represents an earlier phase of the English consciousness that Mr. Day Lewis has evidently never quite assimilated. Perhaps, for the same reason, Mr. Day Lewis regularly dissolves the sharpness of the Yeats and Eliot phrases from which his own are derived. Mr. Day Lewis's poem is consequently a vague, if splendidly appearing and sounding, rhetoric. His phrases leave the impression of having been subtle phrases, far subtler than Mr. Young's Scots, but when we examine them they are just on the point of dissolving away like dream complexities which seem so complex yet are at the same time so indistinct. Mr. Day Lewis's poem is a subtle corruption of language, of the language of Yeats and Eliot. Mr. Young's phrases, derived from the Ballads and from Dunbar and Henryson, are often closer to exact sensation and therefore to graspable thought.

> But in thir nicht, wechtit wi marble stane,
> a drowie fowk doun at the tree-ruits lain
> hae sideit wi you in slaw solemnitie
>
> They hae dwyneit intil a thick nonentitie,
> the reid clay drank and whyte identitie,
> the gift o life has gane intil the fleurs.

Cresseid's tomb from Henryson and Dunbar's 'solemnitie' count for a good deal in these excellent lines. But Mr. Young's poem is necessarily simpler than Valéry, Yeats or Eliot. The exact definition, by means of exact verbal reproduction of sensation, of the subtle and complex thought and experience of the recent European past is beyond Mr. Young's Scots. 'The Kirkyaird by the Sea' is less a translation than a simplification, though it is less simple than other modern Scots poems. It may be that Scotsmen cannot penetrate the most living thought and experience by means of Scots

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but only by means of English and French. The gap between our realizable selves and the Ballads or Dunbar and Henryson is too great. Even though the Ballads and Dunbar and Henryson are parts of ourselves from which we may recognize that we have in important respects deteriorated, our work is not to try to do over again that work. We have to go on to discover our own undiscovered work which is perhaps waiting for us to do and which we alone can do.

J. H. SPEIRS.

WHAT IS A NATIONAL MONUMENT?

BRITISH ARCHITECTS AND CRAFTSMEN, by Sacheverell Sitwell (*Batsford,* 21/-).

EDINBURGH, by G. Scott-Moncrieff (*Batsford,* 15/-).

THE BUILDINGS OF BATH, by Bryan Little (*Collins,* 15/-).

THE AGE OF ADAM, by James Lees-Milne (*Batsford,* 21/-).

GOTHIC ENGLAND, by John Harvey (*Batsford,* 21/-).

GEORGIAN EDINBURGH, by Ian G. Lindsay (*Oliver and Boyd,* 7/6).

Following up the musical revival, there seems to be a revival of popular interest in the visual arts, and the conception of architectural monuments and the idea that they should be preserved seem to be growing out of the antiquarian fixation. The artistic value of eighteenth-century and even Regency architecture has penetrated to those organizations, which do duty in this country for a Ministry of Fine Arts, the Ministry of Works and Buildings and the Ministry of Town and Country Planning. At least, one hopes that it is for this reason, and not merely because of the shortage of building materials, that the Nash terraces round Regent's Park are being preserved. Too many finer architectural schemes have been pulled down in London; whereas in Paris I believe that not only the sixteenth century Place des Vosges but the whole façade of the Rue de Rivoli and the Place de la Concorde (eighteenth and early nineteenth century), containing several hotels and department stores, have been scheduled as national monuments for many years. I believe that at one time the British Museum threatened ruin to Bedford Square. Does it still do so? Very great credit for educating the public, and eventually ministers and M.P.'s, realizing that taste exists even though they themselves may be ill-endowed in that respect, and for actual preservation work, belongs, of course, to the National Trust and to later bodies such as the Georgian Group. We are getting away from the narrow 'Ancient Monument' idea. One wonders how long this reliance on private philanthropy to carry out public duties can be continued under a Social Democracy and, more important, whether Social Democracy in Britain can be trusted to care for such

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things. However far to the Left, or Right, western Europe may move, one knows that a tradition of state responsibility for the arts will be handed on, just as the tradition of artistic patronage was handed on in Russia along with the secret police and the salt mines—the censorship aspect does not concern us here. It might seem frivolous to the more hard-headed Trades Unionist to hold up Italy as an example, where in the economic chaos following liberation the appropriate authorities have set about carefully planned and superlatively well-executed restoration of artistically valuable buildings in every city and village. There is no such tradition here. Also one still hears the sentimental argument against rebuilding.

The task of educating public opinion to acknowledge the value of works of art, especially architecture, is clearly an urgent one, if buildings standing on sites, often of great commercial value, are to be preserved; the shortage of building materials and labour will not last for ever. There is also a commercial aspect to the matter, if the desire to build up a tourist industry is meant seriously. The books under review belong to this movement of artistic 'vulgarization' and one may reasonably ask whether they do their job adequately.

Messrs. Batsford have an established reputation as popularizers of art and architecture. Some of their older books on parish churches and cathedrals are works of extensive antiquarian knowledge and have become text-books. Their recent output shows a sad falling off. There is more effort to be bright and popular—in an elegant sort of way—but almost nothing of 'vulgarization' conceived as a useful and serious task. The common reader who hasn't time to go to the large standard works gets a mixture of pretentious generalizations and scraps of period gossip. The standard of illustration has not been maintained as it might have been. One rejects out of hand Mr. Lees-Milnes's solicitation to go day-dreaming, and it is worse than useless to poke fun at 'obfusc little men in Whitehall'. Cultivated people outside and inside ministries and town halls ought to be co-operating to advise and persuade the usually very plain man who occupies the supreme chair of authority—this is not a party political comment. We are concerned with the continuity of civilization as it is expressed in bricks and stones and with serious practical matters of preservation and adaptation. Eighteenth-century large-scale town-planning can still be a source of inspiration to us and State care for the arts mostly began in that period.

Mr. Sitwell's book is on the whole an exception. I cannot share his enthusiasm for Regency Gothic, and the drawing room of the former Carlton House, illustrated for our admiration, seems very crude, especially the ceiling, but he knows the buildings he describes, he has all Europe as his background, and he loves what he knows. Besides describing, with first-hand enthusiasm and wide contemporary knowledge, most of the best buildings of Inigo Jones, Wren, Vanbrugh, Robert Adam, Chambers and many of their fellow artists—as one might expect he is particularly good on the

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scenic compositions of Wren and Vanbrugh—he gives us detailed accounts of an eighteenth-century shop in an out-of-the-way London street and of remote country houses, and he has a minute knowledge of furniture, fireplaces and door-fittings, the artistic merits of which arouse all his excitement. It is pleasing to have the State Coach (Chambers) and the long-disused State Barge (Kent) instanced as great works of decorative art. Though Mr. Sitwell is decidedly not a profound cultural historian and often indulges in personal reminiscences and romantic visions of aristocratic glory, there is in his book an enormous amount of information that is stimulating and valuable and one can spend several evenings browsing in it. Unfortunately his very obvious foibles have been imitated to a tee-hee by other writers in the series.

An Englishman hesitates to comment adversely on a Scotsman's book about his own capital, especially when the author bears so illustrious a name, but Mr. Scott-Moncrieff's *Edinburgh* is so inadequate that I feel no compunction in quoting a compatriot from one of the great ages of the city: 'This will never do'. More than half the book is devoted to description of, and anecdote about, the Old Town. One should not complain. This was the centre of a civilization that produced the poetry of Henryson and Dunbar and it has a distinctive architecture. But wasn't the New Town 'the Modern Athens'—to be crowned by a Parthenon? It is described briefly, with lists of streets and squares and such conventional remarks as that Robert Adam's plan for Charlotte Square was not carried out as he originally intended. But Charlotte Square at least rivals Bedford Square, and whereas Bedford Square stands alone after thirty years of sporadic raiding, Edinburgh has a good half-dozen architectural compositions of this class linked up by beautiful streets and terraces. Moray Place may be a little ponderous, but where can one find a finer example from this period of what Reynolds called the direct imaginative appeal of architecture as one watches the solemn groups of Tuscan columns and pilasters unfold themselves round the great polygon? There is also that remarkable series of prospects comprising Royal Circus, Great King Street and the hippodrome-shaped Drummond Place, where one sees most of the original pavements and the ironwork still intact. Above all there is Waterloo Place running between two undamaged lines of classical buildings and across an elegant Palladian Bridge towards the monument-crowned Calton Hill. This last isn't illustrated or even mentioned. As regards the cultural history of the city almost nothing is said about the Great Reviews and the vigorous intellectual life of which they were an expression and a focus. The illustrations generally are indifferent; a beautiful room in Holyroodhouse is shown with the dust-sheets in position.

One is glad to be able to point to Mr. Lindsay's little book as a contrast. It is a simple architectural survey of later eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Edinburgh, and within its limits seems to me very well done. There are two maps, one a sketch indicating dates of development of the various districts, the other a repro-

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duction of the P.O. Directory Map of 1829 with the surviving Georgian areas marked in red—their extent is truly impressive. We are given a short history, notes on the architects and notes on the principal buildings and other features. There is plenty of evidence of intelligent control and planning by the City Council. One would like to know more about the organization by which great schemes—great artistically and in bulk—were carried out piecemeal over periods of years by individual tenants. It was only later that bye-laws lapsed and excrescences sprang upwards and outwards; to begin with, civic and individual taste concurred in taking for granted the idea of the street or crescent as a work of art in which the parts should be subordinated to the whole. Though Royal Terrace was not completed till the 'fifties of the last century, haphazard building began with the coming of the railways and industrialism, and civic control was not re-established until a few years ago after much damage had been done. One hopes with Mr. Lindsay that the present day preservation order will be enforced and that care of the city will become a genuine expression of the community's admiration for the work of its ancestors. With the disappearance of Warsaw and most of Dresden, the severer classicism—including the extensive Grecianism—of Edinburgh becomes even more important as an example of the city building of the Age of Reason. It should be of great interest to visitors to the Festival, and one hopes that they are shown it as enthusiastically as one knows that they are shown the Old Town. The present reviewer never found during the war a worthy picture postcard of the works of Playfair, Graham or even Adam. Mr. Lindsay's photographs are excellent and one's only complaint is that that they are not more numerous. A detailed and lavishly produced book is called for.

Mr. Little has carried out his similar project ably and methodically, and he has written another very good guide book which one would be glad to have by one on a visit to Bath. He describes the buildings of the city in relation to a brief history from Roman times to the present day, showing how changing social conditions produced different architectural conceptions, from the rebuilding of the Abbey church on a reduced scale, as part of a plan of immediately pre-Reformation monastic reform, to the laying out of the great schemes by enterprising eighteenth-century landlords, in which in some cases architects like the Woods designed the façades on a comprehensive scenic scale and inferior craftsmen put up houses behind them to suit individual tenants—as it worked out, a highly successful solution of a problem. Bath was developed mainly by private in contrast to the public enterprise of Edinburgh, but the important thing for us is that artists planned the work in both cases and designed in large units. Once again one sees a society, conscious of itself as an entity, expressing itself on a scale commensurate, with its very self, and to the finest effect. This is a very broad generalization and ignores, of course, all kinds of social problems. Mr. Little makes one important and interesting point when he shows

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that the fact Bath was at first a holiday rather than a residential town explains why there is comparatively little interesting interior decoration behind these magnificent fronts. The position and significance of Ralph Allen of Prior Park is explained, and the comparison of the Bath of Beau Nash to Monte Carlo is apt; some interesting artistic contrasts might follow, *e.g.*, with the Casino. I think that when dealing with Bath epitaphs and what they illustrate, Mr. Little might have included Nash's own, which reads, if I remember rightly, that he has fallen

> Beneath the hand that no discernment shows,
> Untaught to honour or distinguish grace.

Surely an excellent example of the height to which the Augustans could exalt the social virtues and the depths to which latitudinarianism could debase divine providence. I think too that he could have found room for a little more about the social scene, though I'm glad he doesn't reproduce any Rowlandson caricatures, and the functions of the Master of Ceremonies—the office lapsed, I believe, in 1914. Mr. Little discriminates between the various buildings of the great age with sound and sensitive taste, and, one must assert, I'm afraid that he is dealing with finer things on the whole than Mr. Lindsay. In bringing his book down to the present day, I think it was waste of illustration space to include photographs of nineteenth-century Gothic churches and modern factories which have no specially Bathonian features and have crowded out lots of other beautiful and distinctive things such as the Cross Bath or the theatre. The growth of the city and its suburbs as it became increasingly residential is, however, very well described. There are useful lists of buildings with names of architects and dates, and a bibliography with comments.

The remaining two books have, as their titles indicate, larger pretentions, and they do very little to justify them. Social and cultural history is something more than the stringing together of historical gossip and masses of antiquarian details. These are the raw material, which needs to be sorted out, explained and interpreted.

Mr. Lees-Milne has read the standard works on the Adam brothers and has also read Mr. Sitwell. He gives a rough account of Robert Adam's life, of his business arrangements and of his work and influence, and he describes a selection of buildings. These descriptions are perfunctory and disjointed, and unfortunately sometimes read like not very efficient précis of something longer—one would like to know more about Mersham-le-Hatch, as Adam was more completely responsible for it than for his vaster mansions. The descriptions of houses are pepped up with bits of contemporary gossip, most of it quite pointless unless its precise artistic or social significance were carefully explained, which it never is. We are told the story of the Adelphi, but one wants to know far more about the organization and status of the Adam firm and about the various grades of employees and assistants; all one gets is a series

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of silly notes in the last chapter. There is also quite a lot to be said, which is relevant to a study of Adam, about the relative positions of country and town houses in England as compared with other countries—only a letter noting the absence of palaces in London is quoted. The disappearance of most of the London mansions is less serious than a comparable loss would be in Paris or Rome, though why they were not bought up for ministerial or ambassadorial purposes is due at bottom to the unique British philistinism which we agree in deploring. In discussing the influence of Adam's style abroad, Mr. Lees-Milne should, I think, decide whether he is talking about the boudoir at Fontainebleau (p. 63, illustrated pl. 37) or a similar one in the Petit Trianon to which he describes an imaginary contemporary visit (p. 162, ref. to same illustration). One must conclude again by saying that the reader who is looking for a simple appreciation of Adam's art supported by a well-planned study of his times must continue to look for it.

Mr. Harvey works on a much bigger scale and with a mass of detail which only the expert mediævalist can check. Whatever the merits of his various individual attributions, the reasons for some of which seem to be extremely tenuous, it is, I believe, fairly widely agreed nowadays that we can talk usefully about the actual architects of a large number of later mediæval buildings, and it is obvious that someone was in charge in every period. Nevertheless, it is surely the common style and the high general level of craftsmanship in all the arts, out of which individual variants arose, that matters and that differentiates the Middle Ages—and also the age of Adam—from our own. Mr. Harvey puts up an enthusiastic case for considering Perpendicular Gothic as the supreme expression of English architecture and Richard II as the greatest English patron. One can, however, admire the spire of St. Michael's, Coventry, without talking about the New Jerusalem, and, after all, none of us saw Old St. Paul's. I cannot see that anyone could doubt the beauty of Westminster Hall, or Ely Octagon, or Winchester Nave, or Beverley Minster, or many smaller ecclesiastical and domestic buildings of the fifteenth century, but this is mere personal rhapsodizing:

> ' . . . in some directions England excelled all her rivals, notably in architecture where Yevele, Wynford, and Herland were laying down an ordered style quite unsurpassed in any age or clime; in poetry, where Chaucer's lyric humour sets ablaze the stilted Court Verse of the day; and in painting, where the walls of St. Stephen's Chapel exceeded in brilliance of composition and execution anything north of the Alps [presumably Mr. Harvey has been on an adventure in time], and the Wilton Diptych reached a pitch of exquisite sensibility hardly ever attained to the west of Constantinople, and but dubiously touched in Italy'. (p. 69).

I also doubt very much whether, 'in the history of Western art John Dunstable's career is England's greatest ornament' (p. 71), and I can attach no useful significance to the assertion that

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'Outside the Court of China at its greatest and most enlightened moments, and possibly the supreme reigns of Minoan Crete, the world can never have seen the equal of Westminster under Richard II'. (p. 43).

If one must have a comparison, I should have thought that one of the lesser Italian courts would have been more sensible. There is a great deal of this kind of mumbo-jumbo in the book which casts doubts over the whole. It begins at the beginning of the world like a schoolboy's essay and there is some very strange speculation about the English national character on p. 6. Great art is linked up with great kings, which in any case Richard II, by any intelligible standard, was not. There are also some very outmoded, not to say naïve, theorizing about art history and progress which do not help any of the arguments. In interpreting the Middle Ages Mr. Harvey tries to repudiate both Coulton and Chesterton and do without the Church altogether:

'Like Confucius long before them, and Goethe long after, the leaders of mediæval action sought an all-pervading unity; unlike either Confucius or Goethe, they were able not merely to discover the principle, but to go far in introducing it into their daily life, and that of the whole people. Nowhere was this more true than in England. Unity in art is a more elusive, less obvious thing than unity in law or administration . . . ' (p. 41 and *cf.* p. 21).

Where does he imagine that Langland got his ideas? From communing with the Malvern Hills apparently. I think that Mr. Harvey might find the writings of Mr. Christopher Dawson, especially *Mediæval Religion*, interesting—they aren't in his vast bibliography. A critic of the machine age who repudiates Matthew Arnold is also in a tight corner, and one may perhaps be permitted to add that, though he may disagree with him about Chaucer, Mr. Harvey should look up what he says about Villon. Mr. Harvey has amassed a great deal of miscellaneous erudition and has great zeal for his task, but his accounts of economic and political events and of movements in thought and literature are confused and distorted by the buzzing of innumerable bees. If he had discussed fewer buildings in greater detail and with fewer superlatives, his case would have been more convincing and more helpful.

One cannot reach a happy conclusion. There is clearly a demand for popular books on British art and monuments at the moment, and apparently the public is prepared to buy something fairly bulky and expensive. It is getting poor value in most cases and the larger task of cultural propaganda and the training of taste is being tackled with dilettante carelessness and irresponsibility.

GEOFFREY WALTON.

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THREE BOOKS ON MUSIC

POETICS OF MUSIC, by Igor Stravinsky (O.U.P.).

MUSIC AND POETRY OF THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE, by Bruce Pattison (Methuen, 16/-).

A HISTORY OF MUSIC IN SCOTLAND, by Henry George Farmer (Hinrichsen).

Stravinsky's Poetics may not be remarkable as an example of the human reasoning faculty, but they will be of inestimable value to the musical historian of the future. The vehemence with which Stravinsky overstates his case adds to, rather than detracts from, the book's documentary significance. Its honesty is appealing, for we can see the relevance of all Stravinsky's prejudices to his creative practice.

Broadly speaking, Stravinsky's æsthetic is Thomist, and though he does not use scholastic terminology, he has obviously been greatly influenced by the writings of Maritain. His belief in the artist as maker and in art as a creative *act* leads him into his fanatical hatred of Wagner, and to a lesser degree Beethoven. One can see why he feels as he does, and his justification is his own creative work and the enormous influence he has had on European music. This does not alter the fact that theoretically he oversimplifies the problem of musical expression in the most ludicrous fashion. The point is not that music cannot and should not 'express' emotion but that the expression should always be interpreted in a convention that is inherently musical—a convention which words or stage business may serve to release. If it were really true that music can represent nothing but itself, then vocal composers ought to set nothing but gibberish, and the more unintelligible the diction of singers the better.

Equally extreme is Stravinsky's insistence on the primacy of melody. One can see what he means by his criticisms of Wagner and Beethoven from this point of view, but he renders his case grotesque when he cites as examples of melodists not only Bellini and Tchaikowsky, but Messager! It is no legitimate criticism to complain that Beethoven and Wagner did not write this particular limited type of melody (anyway Beethoven did on occasion). Stravinsky so reduces the level of what might have been a serious argument that it seems that if he is not excessively crafty (deliberate prevarication) he must be excessively simple-minded. The latter alternative seems unlikely.

The distinction between ontological and subjective time in music is interesting, and is closely related to his anti-expression railings. Music is an art that unfolds itself in time; and since it is also something *made out of* sound the duration of the composition is for Stravinsky an absolute. Subjective time, in Stravinsky's view, is something that belongs merely to decadent romantic music. Again one can see why Stravinsky felt the need to insist on the constructional significance of time, but he oversimplifies the problem

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absurdly. If his account were valid, there would be no difference between the despised 'expressive' changes of tempo and changes of pitch.

None the less this is a stimulating volume, and the biographical sections, as always with Stravinsky, are especially fruitful.

Much of Dr. Pattison's volume provides a useful commentary on Stravinsky's theories of musical expression. The Elizabethans are illuminating from this point of view, because they had no doubt that music could and should express emotion and that it found its true nature only in a union with words. The words provide the impulse for a purely musical stylization; conversely the nature of current musical conventions considerably affected the stylizations of poetry. The relation between music and poetry in the Elizabethan period has never been adequately investigated, fascinating and important subject though it is. Dr. Pattison's careful and comprehensive book thus fills a gap. It is a bit duller than it need have been, and it does not perhaps reveal precisely how the dual composer-poet relation worked as vividly as does the American book on Campion. Its scope however is wider and its documentation more exhaustive. This valuable book would be still more valuable if, in a second edition, Dr. Pattison were to revise his references to mediæval music, which adopt a patronizing attitude that would seem to spring from insufficient knowledge; they certainly cannot be endorsed in the light of modern knowledge.

Dr. Farmer is the foremost living authority on Arabian music. It is evidence of the breadth of his interests, as well as of his industry, that he should have found time to produce also this prodigiously learned and thorough work on the music of his own country. Dr. Farmer's historical method is impressive; he deals with each period under the headings of the People, the Court and Nobility, the Church, the Instruments, and the Music. In the later periods he adds appropriate sections on publishers, concert-givers and teachers. In each case he traces the relations between his different headings, never offering social chitter-chatter unless it has some significance in relation to musical history. The early part of the book is especially valuable; it is interesting to learn that Scotland had a golden age of music in the late Middle Ages, parallel to the work of Henryson and Dunbar. It is a pity that Dr. Farmer does not deal with the attempt at a twentieth-century Scottish renaissance, especially the work of Francis Scott. Throughout, despite his monumental learning, he writes with urbanity and grace.

This admirable book would be improved by the addition of music type examples—especially since so much of the music is unfamiliar and inaccessible.

W.H.M.

SCIENTIFIC MAN VERSUS POWER POLITICS: *Hans J. Morganthau* (*Latimer House*, 15/-).

It is forty years since Graham Wallas attacked the 'intellectualist' error in politics and showed how much of our political

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'thinking' results from non-rational impulse and inference. Since then, Niebuhr, Carr, Drucker, Burnham—to mention only a few of the more recent—have, from their various stand-points, exposed and shown to be inadequate the basic assumptions of the nineteenth century liberal-rationalist approach to political action. The most recent critic of this tradition of politics—a trifle late in the lists, perhaps, but none the less eager to tilt—is Professor Morganthau.

Professor Morganthau believes that 'the philosophy of rationalism has misunderstood the nature of man, the nature of the social world, and the nature of reason itself'. Yet it is to be regretted that he does not spend more time in defining, with precision, the particular philosophy of rationalism that he is attacking, for, as we shall see, he admits the possibility of more than one type. However, in general terms, the form he deprecates belongs to the liberal reformist tradition of the last century; it adopts the methods of science; and it propounds abstract ethical and legal principles by which it attempts to deal with specific situations to which such principles no longer apply. 'The principles of scientific reason are always simple, consistent, and abstract; the social world is always complicated, incongruous, and concrete' (p. 16); and 'The abstract goal replaces the concrete issue; the standard of eternal truth, the consideration of political interests'; such remarks state the gravamen of his charges. He objects further that the very idea of a social 'science' is untenable because the artificial isolation of a social situation that scientific investigation necessitates is impossible in the nature of human and social existence; though there is a surprising page where he seems to afford a modified approval to social planning which, one would imagine, would afford an extreme example of the type of approach he is attacking (*cf.* pp. 131-2).

Now there exists undoubtedly a discrepancy between the human idea of a thing and the thing-in-itself, which the analytical scientific mind can never grasp as a whole. Professor Morganthau is correct in pointing to the dangers which beset attempts to organize human existence in accordance with abstract principles, postulates of the intellect that, by nature essentially static, attempt to fix the conditions of what is by nature essentially dynamic, human existence. He demonstrates correctly, though hardly originally, some of the irrational elements that are involved in all attempts to consider rationally any human situation. But when the grounds of his fundamental objection to the rationalist position are examined, Professor Morganthau reveals himself as an adherent of the very tradition of thought that he is attacking. His appeal is to the 'facts of experience' which, he asserts, go to disprove the abstractions of the scientific rationalists (pp. 14-15). But it is on just the 'facts of experience' that science itself works; and when he asserts that 'they (*i.e.*, the adherents of the outlook that he is considering) have an inveterate tendency to stick to their assumptions and to suffer constant defeat from experience rather than to change their assumptions in the light of contradictory facts', it becomes obvious that what Professor Morganthau is attacking is not any valid

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scientific approach but an entirely inadequate science; he is deprecating an attitude of mind of which no competent scientist would approve or ever has approved. The tendency to fly to universals too soon and the refusal to consider the stuff of experience are what scientists as far back as Bacon have condemned; and indeed Professor Morganthau's strictures on the 'scientists' bear a close resemblance to the objections that Bacon urged against the scholastic philosophers: 'For the wit and mind of man, if it work upon matter, which is the contemplation of the creatures of God, worketh according to the stuff and is limited thereby; but if it work upon itself, as the spider worketh his web, then it is endless, and brings forth indeed cobwebs of learning, admirable for the fineness of thread and work, but of no substance or profit'.

But it is when one examines Professor Morganthau's positive conception of the political world and of the qualities needed in the politician that he becomes most contradictory and inadequate. His views rest on the assumption that the only reality in the sphere of politics is power. 'The balance of power is the essence and stabilizing factor of international relationships'; 'the test of political success is the degree to which one is able to maintain, to increase or to demonstrate one's power over others' (p. 168). Such statements are frequent throughout the book. Yet the appeal to the balance of power and to the pursuit of short-term interests—for that is what his 'positive concept of politics' (p. 80) really amounts to—bears a considerable resemblance to that conception of enlightened self-interest which was a part of the very tradition he is attacking. Again, in his exposition there sometimes creeps in a certain disquiet which shows how much Professor Morganthau needs to examine closely the precise nature of his positive outlook. 'Politics', he asserts, 'is a struggle for power over men, and *whatever its ultimate aim is*, power is its immediate goal and the modes of acquiring, maintaining and demonstrating it determine the technique of political action' (p. 167, my italics). Now the suggestion of a difference between an immediate and an ultimate aim, thrown out here, is one that Professor Morganthau never takes up; yet it invalidates the whole of his positive outlook, for it introduces a possibility of an end beyond that of the maintenance and increase of power. There are other hints, too, of further possible aims. In discussing the failure of fascism, he admits that it failed 'as a practical philosophy because it did not understand the nature of man, who is not only an object of political manipulation but also a moral person endowed with resources which do not yield to manipulation' (p. 15). Yet elsewhere the ethical approach to political action is dismissed: 'In view of the permanent discrepancy between the assumptions of perfectionist ethics and the actual conditions of human actions, action in accordance with the former is possible only at the risk of irrelevance or of failure or of both' (p. 149). (In another place, however, the possibility of choosing 'among several expedients the least evil one' is allowed as constituting 'moral judgment'—p. 173. The methods by which one will recognize the 'more' or the 'less'

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evil modes of conduct are never however discussed).

If Professor Morganthau had applied his view of the political world to an actual 'concrete situation', he might have paused before recommending it. Fascism is the modern political philosophy which has most nearly adopted the ethics of power, and yet it was defeated largely by the believers in that same liberal-rational approach which he condemns. The fact is that his view of what constitutes a concrete situation is at least as limited as that of the exponents of the outlook he is condemning. To assert that power is the only 'reality' is to ignore that whole tradition of thought that by attacking he admits exists and which is therefore an entity to be taken into consideration in an understanding of any political situation. If it is true that half the world's statesmen are actuated by such motives, as Professor Morganthau asserts, then such moral refinements of 'power' as this implies are essential elements in any power situation. In attacking the unrealities of international law, Professor Morganthau forgets that even Hitler needed to cloak his aspirations in words and phrases which were themselves a tribute to the power of those ideas which he pretended (and Professor Morganthau pretends) to despise—a necessity which may well have influenced the nature and timing of his search for domination in a way which it would be 'unrealistic' to ignore. In other words, Professor Morganthau is as guilty as his opponents in abstracting only certain elements from the total situation and treating that part as the whole. It can be added, too, that the particular type of 'realistic' approach that Professor Morganthau advocates is open to many of the objections that the late Susan Stebbing urged against Professor E. H. Carr's *Twenty Years' Crisis* (*cf. Ideals and Illusions*).

Again, when Professor Morganthau attempts to indicate the characteristics of the type of politician he would encourage, he is vague to the point of uselessness. 'Politics is an art and not a science and what is required for its mastery is not the rationality of the engineer but the wisdom and moral strength of the statesman'. But in what this wisdom consists is never disclosed, except in so far as it demands 'insights of a different and higher kind than those of the scientist' (p. 180), and involves a knowledge of what are rather vaguely termed 'the rules of the game'. At another time he seems to suggest a profounder form of rationalism: 'In order to eliminate from the political sphere not power politics—which is beyond the ability of any political philosophy or system—but the destructiveness of power politics, rational faculties are needed which are different from, and superior to, the reason of the scientific age' (p. 16). This form of rationalism, too, is left undefined. Now it may be that the successful wielding of political power involves features of personality which are incommunicable, something which is indicated vaguely by the use of some such word as 'flair', and which emerges from, say, some of Mr. Harold Nicolson's books, or Sir Ronald Storr's *Orientations*; but nothing that Professor Morganthau says inspires any confidence that he has any comprehension of such processes.

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Where one can most sympathize with Professor Morganthau is in his insistence that a particularly shallow type of optimistic rationalism is untrue to the fundamental elements in the human situation (a thesis which has already been better expounded by Professor Niebuhr in *Moral Man and Immoral Society*). But though I think that this is what Professor Morganthau is trying to do, he is at so little trouble to define with any degree of precision the particular characteristics of the tradition he is attacking, his own positive account of the political world is so limited, and the qualities of mind that he would bring to the solution of political problems so vague and confused that his exposition does not inspire the confidence it should. What is now needed is not yet another attack on the rationalist approach but a close examination of the part that reason and the new social 'science' can play in the direction of human affairs, always bearing in mind the essential restrictions and limitations that the abstracting qualities of the intellect involve. Though it contains matter of interest, Professor Morganthau's book is on the whole loosely written and inadequately thought out; and this is a pity, because there is, discernible, a case to be made.

Two further points. The book is far too expensively priced at fifteen shillings for just over two hundred small pages; and it is to be hoped that the American habit (admittedly this was originally an American book) of cutting up chapters by sub-headings is not to be allowed to develop in this country.

G. H. BANTOCK.

THE BRITISH COUNCIL IN THE GOLDEN AGE

H.M.V. have now issued, under the auspices of the British Council, two sets of madrigals sung by the Cambridge University Madrigal Society conducted by Boris Ord, with Isobel Baillie, Margaret Field Hyde, Gladys Winmill, René Soames and Keith Falkner leading the parts and acting as soloists in some of the lighter pieces. These records have come in for a barrage of criticism, and I don't think it's merely a sentimental affection for the Cambridge associations of the records that makes me think the criticism is not entirely deserved.

One must admit, to begin with, that madrigals are essentially chamber music and were meant to be sung by one voice to a part. This is not the same as being sung by soloists; they are concerted vocal music and as such call for a special technique. Duplicating the parts in a largish choir merely muffles the texture in a manner which is especially undesirable on records; on the other hand singers who are professional soloists do not normally take kindly to the idea of concerting with other soloists. The only adequate solution is to train a group of soloists of professional standard to sing concerted music one voice to a part; the examples of unaccompanied madrigals included in the set of Monteverdi records made by Nadia Boulanger's group are a case in point, and so are all the madrigalian

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performances of the Belgian Musica Antiqua ensemble.

The English records cannot be said to approach this standard. Of the solo group, Field Hyde and Soames have the right technique, Isobel Baillie the wrong. Falkner is still a beautiful singer but his voice is too heavy for the rest of the ensemble. The chorally treated madrigals seem to me about as well done as one could hope for, admitting that they are mistaken in principle. The sound of the King's tenor is perhaps a little inappropriately 'churchy'; but the performances show an admirable sense of period and remarkable rhythmic control. In any case the records must be recommended because the madrigals are so well chosen. At least three of the pieces—the magnificent Tomkins, Gibbons's noble *What is our life?* and Wilbye's *Draw on sweet night*—are among the greatest things in European music; and there are many minor delights, among which we must mention a most subtly seductive piece by that interesting, relatively 'late' composer, Ward. I hear rumours that the Madrigal Society have also made some records of church music of the golden age, for the British Council. If this is true, we are really getting somewhere. The British Council is beginning splendidly to fulfil its obligations.

We have space for only the briefest mention of the following miscellaneous recordings. The French pianist Monique Haas has made a record of Bach's Italian Concerto with Rameau's *Les Cyclopes* as fill-up (Decca). Both works need the harpsichord for their adequate realization and this new set cannot supersede Landowska's brilliant version of the Bach. The Rameau piece is most appealing and crisply played. There is a real need for a comprehensive album of Rameau's harpsichord works, played on that instrument.

Two Brandenberg Concertos—those in F and D—are played by the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Koussevitsky. The former shows an admirable sense of period; the latter is marred again by the absence of a harpsichord, for no other instrument can do justice to the superbly inventive harpsichord writing that occurs in the cadenza to what is the first keyboard concerto in anything like the modern sense of the term. But the best of the new Bach records are Germani's nobly virtuosic performance of the D minor Toccata and Fugue on the organ of Westminster Cathedral (H.M.V.), and the new volume of the Bach Society, in which Casals magisterially plays the unaccompanied 'cello suites in E flat and C minor, thereby completing the series. These records should be secured while the going is good, for they will be of great historical significance. The music (especially the E flat Suite) is one of the most magnificent achievements of the classical baroque in its combination of lyrical exuberance with restraint.

A batch of Mozart recordings is disappointing. The D major Quintet, played by the Budapest Quartet with M. Katims is among the finest of Mozart's chamber works but the recording is brash. The grave and powerful Adagio and Fugue K546 is one of the composer's grandest and most tragic utterances, but it is not made any grander by being played—even well played—by an enormous

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body of strings instead of by the string quartet for which it was intended (Columbia, Vienna Philharmonic conducted by von Karajan). The best known of the piano concertos, the A major K488, is lucidly played by Clifford Curzon and the National Symphony Orchestra conducted by Boyd Neel, but the recording is below Decca's standard. The Serenade K361 played by wind soloists of the Vienna Philharmonic conducted by Furtwangler is cleanly played and is delightful but unpretentious music (H.M.V.). We have also two Haydn symphonies, No. 94 in G (The Surprise) and No. 96 in D. The Surprise is stolidly and unimaginatively done by Sargent with the Liverpool Philharmonic (Columbia); No. 96 is given a really exquisite performance by von Beinum with the Concertgebouw orchestra. This music best reveals its radiance when it is played, as it is here, by relatively small resources (Decca).

H.M.V. are continuing their admirable habit of recording complete scenes from operas. This quarter we have the Willow scene from Verdi's *Otello*, the sleep-walking scene from his *Macbeth*, and Isolde's narration from Act I of Wagner's *Tristan*. The *Otello* performance, by Gabriella Gatti and the L.S.O. under Erede, reveals both the subtlety and clarity of texture of one of the greatest works of the nineteenth century. In the Macbeth passage (a much earlier work) the drama is not so completely translated into musical terms, but it remains an extraordinarily powerful and original piece of dramatic writing, if you can forget Shakespeare; and the performance of Margharita Grandi is in the classic tradition. Flagstad's Isolde has by now almost become a classic itself. As a fill-up for the Wagner scene Flagstad sings a most interesting song from Wagner's *Fünf Gedichte von Mathilde Wesendonck* which was intended as a study for *Tristan*. The temperature of this hothouse is no more than tepid, compared with the cataclysmic fervour of Isolde's curse; but the piece has an almost Wolfian nervous sensitivity. It helps one to understand how Wagner's revolutionary technique could appeal so deeply even to men who—like Bruckner —would appreciate neither its egoism nor its eroticism.

The Seventh Symphony of Bruckner, recorded by the now gramophonically celebrated Concertgebouw Orchestra under von Beinum (Decca), is perhaps the most interesting issue of nineteenth-century music this quarter. This is the work that belatedly made Bruckner's reputation. The sceptical cannot do better than to listen first to the trio of the scherzo, and then to the noble slow movement which was written in memory of Wagner. Here we can see how Bruckner's 'mystical' use of Parsifalish chromatics is absorbed into a lyrical sense that makes him Schubert's natural successor. Von Beinum understands the music intimately—its Catholicism, its nature-mysticism, its background of the Austrian baroque. If English listeners don't take to the music after this performance, one must assume they never will. Whether they do or not, the longueurs and naïveties admitted, there is enough music in this slow movement alone to justify Bruckner's popping his more patronizing critics in his pocket, and forgetting all about them.

W.H.M.

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